Article

Academic Service Management and Its Impact on Student Satisfaction in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of academic service management on student satisfaction levels in higher education. Using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, the study revealed that the quality of academic services is a key factor in shaping students' learning experiences. The results indicate that the implementation of digitalized services based on an integrated information system increases efficiency and transparency, in accordance with the principles of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Furthermore, the proactive role of academic advisors in academic guidance and consistent communication through official channels also contribute to increased student satisfaction. Other findings identify the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement (Continuous Quality Improvement/CQI) based on student feedback, such as the development of a helpdesk and staff training. This study concludes that higher education institutions need to strengthen academic services through technology-based approaches, increased academic advisor capacity, and integrated communication systems. The practical implication is the need for policies oriented toward student-centered service to improve the quality of education holistically.
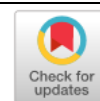
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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive era of higher education, student satisfaction has become a key indicator of a university's success. This phenomenon is inextricably linked to a paradigm shift in education, where students are no longer viewed merely as recipients of knowledge but also as stakeholders with the right to a quality academic experience. Universities are required to excel not only in curriculum and research, but also in providing services that meet student expectations (Majdi, 2011).

Student satisfaction is the result of comparing their expectations of the services they should receive with the reality they experience during the academic process. When services meet or even exceed expectations, students tend to feel satisfied and develop a positive emotional attachment to the institution. Conversely, if academic services are perceived as slow, unresponsive, or riddled with bureaucratic red tape, this can trigger dissatisfaction, resulting in decreased motivation to learn, increased dropout rates, and even a diminished reputation among the university's public.

Furthermore, student satisfaction is also strongly correlated with an institution's success in attracting prospective students. Amidst global competition, prospective students and parents are increasingly critical in choosing a university, not only based on accreditation or teaching quality, but also on testimonials and real-life experiences of students who are or have previously studied there. Universities that are able to provide efficient, transparent, and student-centered academic services will more easily build a positive image and win the competition (Istiningtyas, 2018).

Furthermore, student satisfaction also contributes to a collaborative and dynamic academic environment. Students who feel supported by a good service system tend to be more active in academic and non-academic activities, such as research, social projects, or scientific competitions. They are also more likely to recommend their university to others, ultimately strengthening the institution's network and value in the community.

However, achieving high levels of satisfaction is not easy. Challenges such as limited resources, resistance to system changes, or lack of coordination between work units often become obstacles. Therefore, universities need to conduct regular evaluations of their academic services, listen to student feedback, and commit to continuous improvement. Thus, student satisfaction is not only an indicator of success but also a driving force for universities to continue innovating and holistically improving the quality of their education (Santoso and AR S, 2017).

One factor influencing student satisfaction is the quality of academic service management, which encompasses administrative processes, academic guidance, easy access to information, and learning support facilities. The effectiveness of academic service management impacts not only the student learning experience but also the institution's reputation and competitiveness.

In many universities, student complaints often center on slow service delivery, bureaucratic red tape, or a lack of transparency. This suggests that poor academic service management can lower student satisfaction and even impact their motivation and academic performance. Conversely, structured, efficient, and needs-oriented services can increase student engagement and loyalty to the institution.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study design to understand in depth how academic service management influences student satisfaction in higher education (Donsu, 2016) Qualitative research was chosen because it could explore the perceptions, experiences, and subjective meanings of participants regarding the academic services they received. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews with students from various study programs and semester levels to obtain a variety of experiences. In addition, participant observation was conducted on academic service processes, such as course registration, administrative management, and academic consultations, to observe direct practices in the field. Data were also supplemented by document analysis, including institutional policies, academic guidelines, and student complaint records, to strengthen the findings. The selection of participants used a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of students who had had intensive interaction with academic services, such as class representatives, class representatives, or students who had submitted special requests (Efendi, 2016).

Samples were taken until data saturation was reached, when new information no longer provided new insights. Data analysis was conducted thematically by identifying patterns, categories, and themes emerging from interview transcripts, observation notes, and supporting documents. The analysis process included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to identify the relationship between academic service management and student satisfaction levels. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation by comparing interview results, observations, and documents, and member checking by verifying data interpretation with participants. This study also addressed ethical aspects by maintaining the confidentiality of respondents' identities and obtaining informant consent prior to data collection.

Through this approach, research is expected to provide a holistic understanding of the dynamics of academic service management and its implications for student satisfaction in the context of higher education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study uncovers several key findings related to academic service management and its impact on student satisfaction in higher education. These findings not only describe the actual conditions students face in accessing academic services but also provide in-depth insights into how various aspects of service management can impact their perceptions and overall learning experience.

One key finding that emerged was the gap between student expectations and the actual services they receive. Students, as recipients of academic services, naturally desire efficient, transparent, and responsive processes. However, in practice, many obstacles remain, such as complicated procedures, unclear information, or staff unpreparedness to address specific student needs. This often leads to frustration and erodes student trust in the institution.

On the other hand, the research also revealed good practices implemented by several universities to improve the quality of academic services. Digital transformation is a significant solution to addressing common student complaints. Adopting technology not only simplifies administrative processes but also opens up opportunities for developing more personalized and adaptive services. Students accustomed to easy digital access in their daily lives tend to value campuses that provide robust technology-based services.

Another equally important finding is the role of the academic environment in shaping the student experience. Interactions between academic advisors and students, the quality of communication within the institution, and the support of physical facilities contribute to a sense of comfort and satisfaction. Students who feel supported tend to be more motivated and engaged with campus activities.

This research also highlights the importance of effective feedback mechanisms as part of a continuous improvement cycle. Universities that proactively collect and respond to student feedback demonstrate greater adaptability to academic service challenges. This approach not only improves short-term satisfaction but also fosters a better service culture at the institutional level.

The implications of these findings suggest that effective academic service management requires a holistic approach that integrates technology, human resources, and institutional policies. Universities need to view academic services not merely as a support for the learning process, but as a strategic element that contributes to the overall quality of the higher education experience. Therefore, efforts to improve academic services should be an integral part of a university's development vision, which focuses on student satisfaction and academic excellence.

Efficiency of Administrative Procedures

Most students stated that the lengthy time required for administrative processes, such as submitting certificates, transcripts, or changing academic data, was a major obstacle. They complained about long queues, a lack of responsive staff, and unclear procedural flows. However, several students who had experienced system improvements (such as the adoption of online services) acknowledged increased satisfaction due to the faster and more transparent process.

Quality of Academic Guidance

Academic advisors or supervisors play a crucial role in student satisfaction. Respondents who felt well-supported—through scheduled consultations, clear guidance, and responsiveness to complaints—tended to be more satisfied with academic services. Conversely, students who had difficulty reaching their advisors or felt they didn't receive solutions to their academic problems expressed disappointment.

Accessibility of Academic Information

Unequal access to information is a common problem. Students complain that information about class schedules, graduation requirements, and scholarships is often poorly updated on campus websites or communication groups. This leads to confusion and reliance on information from colleagues or third parties. However, campuses that have implemented

centralized information systems (such as mobile apps or student portals) are considered to facilitate student access to information.

Facilities and Infrastructure Support

The availability of supporting facilities, such as academic consultation rooms, online systems for administrative requests, or student services helpdesks, also impacted satisfaction. Some respondents highlighted that academic services on their campus were quite good due to the support of technology, while others still relied on cumbersome manual processes.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with the Service Quality (ServQual) theory, which emphasizes that service user satisfaction is influenced by five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. In the context of academic services, universities need to consider the following aspects:

The digital transformation of higher education academic services has brought significant changes in increasing the efficiency and transparency of administrative processes. The adoption of an integrated information system allows students to access various academic services online, from course registration and requesting certificates to checking grades, without having to face long queues or relying on administrative office hours. Research findings indicate that students tend to be more satisfied when they can complete academic matters quickly and easily through digital platforms, as this reduces the administrative burden that has often been a source of complaints.

This concept aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory, which emphasizes that user acceptance of a technology system is determined by two main factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the context of academic services, students will be more open to using digital systems if they perceive tangible benefits, such as time savings, ease of access, and transparency of information. Furthermore, a user-friendly interface and responsive technical support also contribute to increased adoption of the technology (Darmawan & Sujoko, 2017).

However, the success of service digitalization depends not only on the availability of technology but also on the readiness of human resources, both from the service providers (administrative staff, lecturers, and IT teams) and the users (students). Adequate training and outreach are necessary to ensure all parties can utilize the system optimally. Furthermore, universities need to ensure data security and system sustainability, including server maintenance and feature updates as needed.

The positive impact of digitalization extends beyond student satisfaction to campus operational efficiency. Integrated systems automate previously labor-intensive and time-consuming processes, such as data verification, grade recording, and tracking completion of administrative requirements. This allows campus staff to focus more on services that require a personalized approach, such as academic counseling or handling special cases.

Moving forward, the development of digital services in higher education institutions needs to continue to innovate, for example by integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into student service chatbots or data analytics to predict students' academic needs. Thus, digitalization is not merely a temporary solution, but part of a long-term strategy to create a better and more sustainable academic experience.

In the higher education ecosystem, academic advisors play a strategic role as a bridge between students and the university's academic system. Effective academic guidance extends beyond fulfilling administrative obligations like completing study plan cards or signing documents. It requires a proactive approach to truly understand and monitor student progress. Research findings indicate that students who receive intensive guidance from academic advisors tend to have a more focused academic experience with fewer obstacles.

The concept of student-centered learning is an important foundation for understanding the urgency of the proactive role of academic advisors. In this paradigm, academic services must center on the needs of students as learning subjects, not merely administrative objects. Proactive academic advisors will take a personal approach to identify each student's potential, difficulties, and academic goals. They don't wait for students to come

to them with problems, but actively schedule regular meetings, monitor academic progress, and provide input regarding course selection or personal development opportunities such as internships, research, or scholarships (Bruno, 2019).

This proactive advising practice is also closely linked to academic advising theory, which emphasizes a holistic approach. Advisors serve not only as conduits of curriculum information but also as mentors, helping students integrate academic experiences with long-term career plans. For example, they can recommend elective courses that align with students' specific interests or direct them to participate in faculty research projects. This approach fosters a sense of support and appreciation in students, ultimately contributing to increased academic satisfaction and success.

However, challenges in implementing this proactive role often arise from lecturers' heavy teaching loads or a lack of incentives for mentoring activities. To address this, universities need to create supportive systems, such as allocating dedicated time for mentoring, mentoring skills training for advisors, or recognizing mentoring activities as part of lecturer performance assessments. Furthermore, utilizing technology, such as digital platforms for recording student progress, can facilitate lecturers in monitoring students' academic track records in real time (Bhakti & Rahmawati, 2018).

The impact of this proactive guidance is long-term. Students who feel well-supported tend to complete their studies more quickly, achieve better academic results, and develop a stronger sense of belonging to the institution. Furthermore, advisors also benefit from direct feedback on the effectiveness of the curriculum from the student perspective, which can serve as a reflection for improvements to the learning system. Thus, the proactive role of advisors is not only a determining factor in student satisfaction but also an integral part of improving the overall quality of higher education.

Effective communication within higher education is the backbone of successful academic services. Research findings reveal that unequal access to information is often a major source of frustration for students. This problem arises when important information such as changes to class schedules, academic requirements, or scholarship opportunities is not communicated equitably and timely to all stakeholders. This phenomenon indicates gaps in the communication management system that can significantly impact students' academic experiences.

The essence of ideal campus communication lies in consistency and transparency of information. Universities need to establish a structured information dissemination mechanism through official channels that is accessible to all students without exception. This system should encompass multiple communication platforms such as an integrated academic portal, official email, campus mobile apps, and digital bulletin boards, while maintaining synchronization of information across all channels. The key challenge is ensuring that the same information is received uniformly by students from various study programs and classes, while maintaining accuracy and timeliness of delivery.

Applying modern organizational communication principles can be a solution to this problem. An integrated, multi-channel communication concept allows important information to reach students through multiple media simultaneously, thereby minimizing the possibility of missing information. Furthermore, establishing a dedicated team responsible for campus information management can help maintain the consistency and accuracy of the content delivered. This team should work closely with all academic units to ensure that no vital information is delayed or distorted during its dissemination (Beauty and Arif, 2009).

Open communication also plays a crucial role. Students, as service recipients, have the right to receive clear explanations about the various academic policies that affect them. Universities need to develop a culture of two-way communication where students are not merely passive recipients of information but also have channels to ask questions, clarify information, or provide feedback regarding the information they receive. These feedback mechanisms can take the form of structured discussion forums, regular Q&A sessions with faculty leaders, or dedicated digital platforms for submitting questions and complaints.

Digital technology offers innovative solutions to improve the effectiveness of campus communications. Utilizing an automated notification system integrated with the academic information system can ensure that every important update reaches the students immediately. The use of artificial intelligence algorithms can also help personalize information, allowing students to receive only notifications relevant to their study program, semester level, or specific interests. This approach not only improves communication efficiency but also reduces the information overload that students often experience (Baharuddinet al., 2016).

The impact of consistent and open communication is multidimensional. At the individual level, students will feel more valued and have greater control over their academic development. At the institutional level, a healthy communication culture will create a transparent and collaborative academic environment. Furthermore, these effective communication practices will contribute to the positive image of the university in the eyes of the public and external stakeholders. Therefore, investing in building a robust communication system is not merely an operational necessity, but an integral part of a university's sustainable development strategy.

In the context of higher education academic services, a commitment to continuous improvement is not merely a discourse, but an urgent need. Several universities have demonstrated their commitment by implementing student feedback mechanisms as a basis for concrete changes, such as the development of dedicated helpdesks, streamlining administrative procedures, or improving staff competency through regular training. These practices reflect the application of the principles of continuous quality improvement (CQI), which emphasizes a repeated cycle of evaluation, planning, implementation, and monitoring to achieve increasingly better service standards over time (Azan, 2015).

CQI in the context of higher education is based on the understanding that student satisfaction is a dynamic indicator that continually evolves as student expectations and needs change. The improvement process should not stop at a specific point but should become part of the organizational culture. For example, universities that routinely collect student satisfaction data through semester surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), or online complaint channels have a stronger foundation for identifying problem areas and designing targeted solutions. This data is useful not only for technical improvements such as updating information systems, but also for more strategic policy changes, such as adjusting service hours or adding new services to meet student needs.

Furthermore, the CQI approach also requires active involvement from all levels within the organization, from university leadership to field staff. Training and workshops on service excellence need to be conducted regularly to ensure that all personnel understand the importance of student-centered services and have the necessary skills to implement them. In some cases, universities even involve students directly in service improvement teams, either as consultants or co-creators of solutions, so that the results truly align with user needs (Alfiani, 2016).

The main challenges in implementing CQI often lie in resistance to change and limited resources. To overcome this, universities need to establish incentive systems that encourage innovation and improvement at the work unit level, as well as allocate a dedicated budget for service development. Transparency in communicating evaluation results and improvement measures to all stakeholders is also crucial to foster ownership and support for the change process.

The impact of consistent CQI implementation is seen not only in increased student satisfaction but also in campus operational efficiency. Continuously refined procedures reduce wasted time and resources, while trained and motivated staff can provide more effective services. In the long term, this culture of continuous improvement will strengthen the university's reputation as an institution responsive to stakeholder needs and committed to providing the best education. Therefore, continuous evaluation and improvement should not be viewed as an additional burden, but rather as a strategic investment for competitive advantage in the increasingly dynamic era of higher education.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on a comprehensive analysis of academic service management and its impact on student satisfaction, this study concludes with several key findings. First, the quality of academic services is a significant determinant in shaping student experience and satisfaction in higher education. Second, the implementation of service digitization through an integrated information system has been shown to increase efficiency, transparency, and technology acceptance according to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Third, the proactive and student-centered role of academic advisors is a critical component in creating a meaningful academic experience. Fourth, consistent and open communication through structured official channels is an important prerequisite for ensuring equal access to academic information. Fifth, the continuous quality improvement (CQI) approach through ongoing evaluation and response to student feedback has demonstrated effectiveness in improving service quality. The practical implications of these findings emphasize the need for higher education institutions to: (1) strengthen digital infrastructure in academic services, (2) increase the capacity and commitment of academic advisors through regular training, (3) build an integrated multi-channel communication system, and (4) institutionalize feedback and continuous improvement mechanisms. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on higher education management by integrating the concepts of service quality, technology acceptance, and student-centered learning in the context of academic services. The study's limitations lie in the sample size and qualitative methods used, suggesting further research using a mixed-methods approach and a broader institutional scope. Overall, the findings of this study confirm that investing in improving the quality of academic services not only increases student satisfaction but also contributes to higher education's competitive advantage in an increasingly digital and user-oriented education era.

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