check for updates

IMPROVEMENT OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL STAFF'S STRATEGIC ROLES IN DIGITAL ERA THROUGH QUALITY ACADEMIC SERVICE

Check for updates

Iffah Budiningsih[1+]
Efridani Lubis[2]
Reni Armiati[3]

[1,2,3]As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia.
[1]Email: Iffah_budiningsih@uia.ac.id Tel: 0818-130-957
[2]Email: efridani.fh@uia.ac.id Tel: 0816-1871-743
[3]Email: ren.army258@uia.ac.id Tel: 0812-8499-9799

(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

The aim of the evaluative study was to investigate and acquire empirical data on the quality of academic service provided by educational staff to the students/lecturers in a private university. The study employed survey method to the target population of all students in the fourth, sixth, and eighth semester of 2019/2020 academic year (six faculties) in the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University Jakarta; from the reached population of 4,000 people, 215 samples were acquired by simple random sampling technique. The data were collected by a questionnaire instrument with Likert scale and were further analyzed descriptively by involving Excel and SPSS software programs. The result showed that: (1) the educational staff's academic service quality is considered adequate (avg. score = 3.3); signifying (that the educational staff's performance is yet to reach the excellent service standard (good category with score = 4, or very good category with score = 5); (2) the reliability and empathy aspects score 2.90 in average (less adequate); (3) the staff's require to develop knowledge, attitude, and skills that meet the standard of excellent service as above; therefore, the system of independent knowledge/attitude/skills is needed. Among the methods to develop such a system is by direct or indirect intervention media in the form of communication media (e.g., WA group), workshop/training, morning briefing, excursion/gathering, job rotation, and mentoring.

Contribution/ Originality: This study document is an important document for HRD As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University which is used as the formulation of the educational staff performance improvement policy to the academic excellent services; and this document is one of the assessment components for increasing the value of institutional accreditation of University.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the Law No. 20/2013 concerning Indonesian National Education System stipulates, an educational staff is a member of society that devotes oneself and is appointed to support the education implementation; the staff also is in charge of the administration, management, development, supervision, and technical service to support the education process in an educational unit. On top of that, Regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture No. 3/2020 concerning the National Standard of Higher Education mentions that the educational staff is a member of society that devotes oneself and is appointed to support the implementation of higher education. The same regulation has

further explained that the minimum required qualification of an educational staff is Associate Diploma degree or at least Senior High School degree and its equivalent for administrative staff. For those appointed in certain positions (e.g., laboratory assistant, librarian, IT technician), a certificate of competence is required in accordance with one's duties and area of expertise.

According to Suparman (2012) an educational staff is an administrative worker that provides services to the students and the teachers/lecturers; the service encompasses all administrative matters to support the implementation of the learning process. That being said, the implementation of the learning process is considered well-executed if the three core elements of higher education (students, lecturers, and educational staff) are able to synergize and cooperate with each other. Suparman (2012) also argues that the educational staff serves as the supporting component of an education system.

Regarding academic service, Suparman (2012) elaborates that despite not partaking directly in the learning process, an educational staff is considered as the frontline service providers for the students and the lecturers. Thereby, one is demanded to provide excellent service in ensuring that all components of the learning process perform optimally, as well as to facilitate a comfortable and safe learning process. Regarding the quality aspect, the educational staff's service is much related to the notions of quickness, accuracy, and ease of access in providing information to the students/lecturers and supporting the learning process. Therefore, the educational staff is required to meet a certain standard of knowledge, skills, and attitude in giving service. In line with that, Budiningsih (2016) mentions that the indicators of service quality consist of a) tangibility: service must be measurable and observable by senses; b) reliability: service must be conducted in an accurate and consistent manner; c) responsibility: service must be conducted responsibly to provide quick, easy, and sustainable result; d) assurance: a service must provide assurance of safety or assurance from risks to the users; e) empathy: a service must take into account the personal attentiveness towards the customers. Moreover, Yoga (in Sodik, Suprapto, and Pangesti (2013)) points out several internal aspects to consider in achieving optimum service quality, i.e., a) appropriate appearance, b) proactiveness, c) creativity, d) motivation, e) time management, f) sincere service, and g) empathy. Further, Yunanto, Setiono, and Medyawati (2012) state that responsibility is the most crucial aspect of service; among the other essential service aspects are competence, attitude, appearance, attentiveness, actions, comfort, and accuracy. Henceforth, a service provider requires to implementation such conduct in providing an excellent service to meet the customers' satisfaction.

From the previous notions, the study defines academic service quality as the condition and extent of service performed by the educational staff; the service takes the form of all administrative assistance activities to support the implementation of the learning process. The indicators of service encompass: a) tangibility; b) reliability; c) responsibility: quick, easy, and sustainable; d) assurance of safety/from risks, and e) empathy: comfort in service and accurate to address what the students' need.

The qualification of the educational staff in the As-Syafi'iyah, Islamic University is presented in the following table:

Table-1. Numbers & education qualification of educational staff.

No.	Education Qualification	Number of Staff	%	Description:
1	Senior High School	24	40.70	-
2	Associate Degree	11	18.60	-
3	Bachelor Degree	20	33.90	-
4	Master Degree	4	6.80	-
	TOTAL	59	100%	-

Based on Table 1, the overall qualification of educational staff has met the requirements as regulated in the Regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture No. 3/2020. The staff consists of 40.7% administrative staff with senior high school degree and 59.3% non-administrative expert staff (e.g., IT operator, librarian, and others) with

the qualification of associate diploma degree, bachelor degree, and master degree. Based on the staff's educational qualification above, evaluative research is deemed necessary to identify the academic quality service provided by the educational staff. The study, therefore, seeks to answer the problem, whether or not the educational staff in the aforementioned institute is capable of providing excellent service in accordance with their educational qualification.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted in As-Syafi'iyah, Islamic University Jakarta. The study employed survey method to the target population of all students in the fourth, sixth, and eighth semester of 2019/2020 academic year (six faculties); from the reached population of 215 people, 215 samples were acquired by simple random sampling technique. The data were collected by questionnaire instrument with *Likert* scale, and analyzed descriptively by involving a measure of central tendency (mean, median, mode) as well as a measure of dispersion (minimum score, maximum score, deviation standard, percentage). Moreover, statistical data were analyzed by Excel and SPSS for Windows ver. 25 software.

Validity and reliability test were conducted prior to the implementation of the questionnaire instrument. The validity test employed the Product Moment formula (the instrument is valid if $r_{count} \geq 0.30$). In addition, the reliability test involved Cronbach's alpha coefficient (r) formula (the instrument is reliable if $r_{count} \geq 0.6$). The results of the validity and reliability test are displayed in the following Table 2.

Table-2. Instrument validity & reliability test result.

No.	Variable	Numbers of Instruments	R-count Product Moment	R-coefficient Reliability	Description:
1	Educational Staff's Quality of Academic Service	17	0.43 – 0.86	0.93	Valid and Reliable

Moreover, the following Table 3 shows a list of variable indicator and instruments of the educational staff's academic service quality:

Table-3. Variable & research indicator.

No.	Variable	Indicator	Numbers of Questions
1	Educational Staff's Quality of Academic Service	1. Physical Service Availability/Tangibility	Four questions
		2. Reliability	Four questions
		3. Responsibility	Three questions
		4. Assurance	Three questions
		5. Empathy	Three questions

The assessment referred to the average score given by each respondent on the 17 statement items in the instrument. The assessment score involved a mean score of 17 statement items that were assessed by the score range of one to five. The range score of assessment criteria is as follows:

Score: 5 = Very Good

Score: 4 = Good

Score: 3 = Adequate

Score: 2 = Bad

Score: 1 = Very Low

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the respondents' profile is displayed in the following Table 4. Respondents in this study are students of semester 4, 6, 8 who have long received academic services from the educational staff.

Table-4. Identity of respondents participating in the evaluative research of educational staff's academic service quality.

No.	Respondents' identity	Total amount (People)	%
1	Fourth semester	83	38.60
2	Sixth semester	75	34.90
3	Eighth semester	57	26.50
	Total	215	100.00
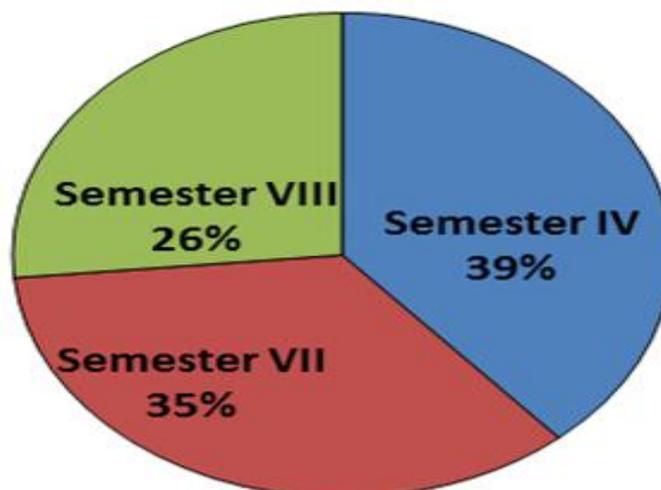
Figure-1. Numbers responden (fourth, sixth and eight semester students).

The descriptive analysis result indicates that the respondents' assessment of the educational staff's academic service quality is 3.2648 or 3.3 (mean) with an error standard of 0.04361; the numbers signify that the quality falls into "adequate" see Table 5.

Table-5. The respondents' average assessment score of the educational staff's quality of academic service.

Statistics		
Educational Staff's Quality of Academic Service		
N	Valid	215
	Missing	0
Mean		3.2648
Std. Error of Mean		.04361
Median		3.2353
Mode		3.71
Std. Deviation		.63949
Variance		.409
Range		3.00
Minimum		1.65
Maximum		4.65
Sum		701.94

Based on the table, the average score of the respondents' assessment on each indicator of the educational staff's academic service quality is as follows:

a. The indicator of physical service availability (tangibility) scores 3.50, or in adequate category.

b. The indicator of reliability scores 2.90, or in nearly adequate category.

c. The indicator of responsibility scores 3.30, or in adequate category.

d. The indicator of assurance scores 3.60, or in adequate category.

e. The indicator of empathy scores 2.90, or in nearly adequate category.

Table-6. Average score of respondents' perception regarding the instrument statement of the educational staff's quality of academic service.

No	Variable	Indicator	Statement items	Average Score (mean)
1	The educational staff's academic service quality	a. Availability of physical services/Tangibility	1. Punctuality	3.83
			2. Administrative room's cleanliness	3.96
			3. Service atmosphere	3.13
			4. Clear information	3.20
			Average Score	*3.50*
		b. Reliability	5. Consistent academic information	3.29
			6. Quality of Wi-fi hotspot access	2.51
			7. Complete academic information	2.72
			8. Fast and accurate academic service	3.25
			Average Score	*2.90*
		c. Responsibility	9. Accurate service that solves the clients' needs	3.43
			10. Schedule timeliness	3.26
			11. Quick and up-to-date information	3.29
			Average Score	*3.30*
		d. Assurance	12. Adequate service professionalism	3.30
			13. Systematic archiving	3.67
			14. Confidentiality assurance	3.82
			Average Score	*3.60*
		e. Empathy	15. Attentiveness towards students	3.22
			16. Equal service quality	2.29
			17. Solution	3.31
			Average Score	*2.90*
	Average score of five indicators			3.3 (adequate)

Based on Table 6, the analysis result indicates that the average score of the educational staff's academic service quality is **3.3** or in adequate category. The educational staff is yet to achieve the standard of excellent service (score of four in good category, or five in very good category). The study therefore views the importance of enhancing the educational staff's service quality to meet the students' expectations in achieving the expected standard of excellent service. In line with that, an intervention measure is required to upgrade the staff's knowledge, attitude, and skills to provide excellent service. Persuasive and motivational approaches from the educational staff's leader or superiors are among important aspects to consider as well. This notion is supported by Sodik et al. (2013) research claiming that leadership factors and employment status contribute to the quality of employee services. The character of a leader is expected to be a role model for one's subordinates in improving the quality of service to customers. The desired leadership character involves attitudes, e.g., hospitality, punctuality, as well as quickness and responsiveness towards the customer's problems. Meanwhile, employment status is also viewed as an essential factor to influence the level of confidence. An employee with an internship status will have a different level of confidence compared to a permanent one. Therefore, the distinction in employment status should be avoided; the status of all employees is the same in relation to their service obligations. All educational staff are required to follow common standards, such as being on time, friendly, complying with all the regulations, etc.

Among the five service quality indicators, three indicators (tangibility, responsibility, and assurance) meet the score of 3.0 or adequate category. Meanwhile, the indicators of reliability and empathy are considered not yet to

reach the adequate category, since the indicators' score is below 3.0 (avg. score of 2.9). This is in line with the findings of Nurziah (2016) which shows that the performance of the educational staff at STIA Panca Marga, Palu in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia is still lacking in indicators of reliability (in aspects of work quality and timeliness). On the other hand, the findings of Asih, Nuridja, and Zukri (2016) report that service responsibility does not affect salon customer satisfaction. Such findings supposedly took place since the salon customers are able to use the service of other salons at any time (because they were not satisfied) without having to obtain prior permission from the previous salon. Simply put, the customer does not have legal ties with the service provider in terms of service sustainability. This applies differently in the present study, as the aspect of responsibility is considered as essential in relation to service sustainability for the students (at least for 8 semesters in an undergraduate program). Further, the results of research conducted by Yunanto et al. (2012) at the Islamic Bank of Jakarta showed that 'responsibility' is the most dominant variable of excellent service among others, namely ability, attitude, appearance, attention, action, comfort, and accuracy. This is different from previous research in terms of responsibility as an aspect of excellent service quality; this is supposedly caused by the difference between both studies' objects and service targets, between a formal institution and informal business institutions (SMEs).

The detailed elaboration of the average score of the indicators of reliability and empathy (indicators that do not reach the score of 3.0 in Table 7) is presented as follows:

Table-7. Average score of respondents' assessment that reaches <3.0.

Indicator	Statement items	Average Score
a. Reliability	6. Quality of Wi-fi hotspot access	2.51
	7. Complete academic information	2.72
b. Empathy	16. Equal service quality	2.29

The previous table illustrates the essential improvements for the Human Resources management of the institute to conduct in upgrading the educational staff's service. To put it another way, the management is required to improve these items:

a. Accessible Internet hotspots.

b. Availability of comprehensive academic information.

c. Equal service quality to all students.

According to Saputra, Nugraha, and Widiartanto (2015) service quality has a strategic role in meeting the customers' needs and expectations; in turn, the customers will develop loyalty to the service provider institutions. Such an atmosphere is expected to encourage loyal students as the extension of word-of-mouth promotional agents of the university.

Johnston (2004) states that the core of excellent service revolves around the notion of: "easy to implement, meet the customer's expectation, and provide enjoyable experience" to the service users and providers as well. Excellent service has to be implemented optimally so as to encourage the customers to give positive feedbacks such as "easy, quick, and very helpful." Johnston further argues that the concept of excellent service consists of: 1) fulfilling promise or the customer's expectation (not required to exceed one's expectation), 2) providing a "personal touch" in giving service, 3) providing extra efforts in solving the customer's problem, and 4) being attentive and responsive towards the customer's questions.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

The results of the present research on the educational staff's academic service quality are expected to be able to describe the quality of academic services in private higher institutions. Therefore, it is expected to be the reference regarding policy implementation on human resource development for educational staff.

Based on the research findings, the respondents considered that the staff's academic service quality is in the adequate category, with an average score of 3.3; the number signifies that the staff's quality of academic services has not yet reached the 'excellent' standard, which is in the 'good' (score = 4) or 'very good' (score = 5) category. Among five assessment indicators (tangibility, reliability, responsibility, assurance, and empathy), the indicators of reliability and empathy score below 3.0, particularly on the items as follows:

a.   Accessible Internet hotspots (average score = 2.51).

b.   Availability of comprehensive academic information (average score = 2.71).

c.   Equal service quality to all students (average score = 2.29).

Further, this study recommends the implementation of policies and interventions to improve the quality of academic service to achieve the 'good' category (score = 4) or the 'very good' category (score = 5), particularly on items that score below 3.0. Some suggested interventions to build a system of "transfer of knowledge/skills/attitudes" as well as to increase the staff's self-confidence and sense of belonging include:

a.   Individual communication platforms:

Individual communication platforms for educational staff, such as WA groups or counseling units that discuss work-related and un work related matters

b.   Training/workshop:

Training/workshop on certain sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the implementation of digital services. This is seen as an essential aspect to encourage the staff's competence and technological literacy

c.   Morning briefings:

Morning briefing conducted by the staff and the superiors is seen as an encouragement in carrying out routine tasks that many may view as boring activities. Morning briefings can be implemented in ways such as: at least once a week all education staff conduct morning briefings (15 minutes) to each other. Moreover, morning briefing is also seen as the medium for the staff to share news, deliver complaints, as well as to discuss and solve work or un work related problems.

d.   Excursion/gathering:

Routine excursion / gathering events are beneficial to build the staff's togetherness and sense of belonging to the institution where they work; such conducts are expected to encourage the staff's performance and improvement of service quality.

e.   Job rotation;

Rotation of duties is seen as a creative way to encourage regeneration and to minimize boredom at work.

f.   Mentoring

Mentoring activities are essential in the context of "transfer of knowledge/skills/ attitudes" without having to leave work. Such activities are expected to encourage knowledge transfers among the staff.

REFERENCES

Asih, N. S., Nuridja, I. M., & Zukri, A. (2016). The influence of Prima service (Service Excellence) to the customer satisfaction Salon Agata Singaraja. *Journal of Economic Education Study Program (JPPE), Undiksha, 7*(2), 1-10.

Budiningsih, I. (2016). Quality evaluation of the library Service of Syafi'iyah Islamic University (UIA). *Academic Journal Tekonoligi Education, MTP UIA 5*(1), 1-14.Available at: https://doi.org/10.34005/Akademika.v5i01.490.

Johnston, R. (2004). Towards a better understanding of service excellence. *Managing Service Quality, 14*(2/3), 129-133.Available at: 10.1108/09604520410528554.

Nurziah. (2016). Education performance at private high school colleges. *EJurnal Catalogist, Tadulako University, 4*(8), 25-34.

Saputra, F. A., Nugraha, H., & Widiartanto, H. S. (2015). Prima service influence & price to customer loyalty (study on customer service PT. Pos Indonesia Semarang). *Journal of Business Administration, 4*(3), 216-223.

Sodik, M. A., Suprapto, I., & Pangesti, D. (2013). Factors related to the implementation of PRIMA services officers in the Rsui Orpeha Tulungagung. *Strada Journal of Scientific Health, 2*(1), 24-32.

Suparman, M. A. (2012). *Modern instructional design.* Jakarta: Erlangga.

Yunanto, M., Setiono, W., & Medyawati, H. (2012). *Responsibilites and excellent service on customer satisfaction: Case study of DKI Islamic Bank.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Management and Education Innovation IPEDR, 196 IACSIT Press, Singapore.