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THE STUDENTS' SATISFACTION LEVEL TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY AT POLITEKNIK SULTAN SALAHUDDIN ABDUL AZIZ SHAH

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Abstract

In this highly competitive environment nowadays, an organisation needs some competitive advantage to sustain. Customer satisfaction can be considered as an important indicator to maintain a competitive advantage. In the higher education sector, students are the customers of an institution (Huang, 2009). Thus, developing customer (students) satisfaction should be a primary goal of higher learning institutions. The purpose of this research is to identify students' satisfaction level towards service quality provided at Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah (PSA) based on learning environment, academic process and relationship with lecturers and support staffs. The general findings show that the majority of students are satisfied with the services provided by PSA. The findings also should help PSA make better strategic plan in the future to enhance students' satisfaction.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, educational sector, service quality, higher learning institution

1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, competitive advantage through high quality service is an increasingly vital weapon in business survival. The educational industry, has certainly not been exempted from increased competition from local provider and also abroad. Quality and customer satisfaction have long been recognised as playing a crucial role for organisation's success. Many companies are interested in studying, evaluating and implementing strategies that aim at improving customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is a feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations (Kotler, 2009). In the context of higher learning institution, it is crucial to strive towards meeting customers' expectation in order to sustain in the business. However, when it comes to higher education, it is not only the meeting between teacher and student that constitutes the service quality evaluation; it is the complete and full offering from the higher learning institution. In other words, it is the student's evaluation of services the institution offers that is of importance.

2.0   Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality

The service quality in the education sector is important towards educational excellence. Service quality in educational industry is defined on the basis of students overall evaluation on the services they received which covers a variety of educational activities both inside or outside the classroom such as classroom based activities, faculty member/student interactions, educational facilities and contacts with the staff of the institution (Hanaysha, Haim Hilman & Ari Warokka, 2011).

Alves & Raposo (2010) mentioned that there is a positive perceptions of service quality has a significant influence on student satisfaction as satisfied student would attract more students through word-of-mouth communications. The main factors that could affect the level of students' satisfaction were; support facilities for teaching and learning such as libraries, computer and lab facilities, learning environment (rooms of lectures, social space and university buildings) and external aspects of being a student such as finance and transportation. With all these capabilities, an institution will be able to meet student expectations and compete effectively (Ilias, Hasan, Rahman & Yasoa, 2008)

2.2 Student Satisfaction

Usman (2010) defined satisfaction is perceived as the intentional performance which results in one's contentment. Student satisfaction plays an important role in determining accuracy and authenticity of the system being used. The expectation of the students may go as far as before they even enter and engage in higher education (Palacio, Meneses & Perez, 2002). However, Hasan & Ilias (2008) have argued that satisfaction actually includes issues of perceptions and experiences of students during the campus life. Student satisfaction is being shaped continually by repeated experiences in life on campus.

Numerous studies have addressed the issue of service quality and student satisfaction. Hasan, Ilias, Rahman & Abd Razak (2008) has identified service quality dimension which include tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy as positive contributors towards student satisfaction. Another study by Hanaysha et.al (2011) also supported the previous study as it found that there is significant relationship between SERVQUAL model and students' satisfaction.

3.0   Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study focuses on several factors required for PSA students in identified the level of satisfaction. Specially, this study looks the students' satisfaction level towards service quality at PSA through the three factors such as learning environment, academic process and relationship with lecturer and staff.

3.2 Population and Sample Selection

Population of the study consists of 2666 students from the PSA. The researcher had determined a sample of the population of students from four departments in PSA. In this study, the sample taken is 353 students. Based on Sample Size Determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), if the population is 2666 then the sample size are 335. This shows the sample taken by the researcher of 353 is adequate and representative of the population. Data have been collected from students enrolled during December 2014 session.

All the respondents had given equal opportunity to participate in the survey within the survey data collection time frame. In order to effectively capture the differences by category from the study population and to select sample, researcher had used a simple random sampling technique. Researcher decided to use simple random sampling because student experiences might difference from each department. For further research, determine other target of population of the polytechnic students will be carried out.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

In this study, the instrument that researcher use to collect data are questionnaire which is constructed for the students' satisfaction level towards service quality at PSA. The question had adopted and adapted from a few article but the main article that researcher use as reference is Student Satisfaction Survey at Kenya Forest Service (2013). Questionnaire method was used because it is well suited to this study.

The questionnaire consists of four sections. The first section request the respondents to complete four questions related to respondents' profile. These include gender, race, year of study and department.

Section B consists of nine questions related to identify the level of students' satisfaction towards learning environment at PSA. It relate with the facilities of the classroom or theatre, the availability of ICT facilities and the availability of relevant books, journals and other reading material connection with course in the library.

Section C contains of 12 questions related to identify the level of students' satisfaction towards their academic process at PSA. These include teaching methods, curriculum, consultation hour, assessment, examination and registration process.

Section D request the respondents to respond to questions related to identify the level of students satisfaction toward relationship with lecturer or support staff at PSA. These include communication channel, welfare and interest and also responds to students queries. The respondents are asked to provide their response by using a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied). The value of Cronbach's Alpha (0.7) reflects acceptable reliability of the instrument.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The primary aim of this study was to measure students' satisfaction level towards service quality at PSA. Focus of the study was in three factors such as learning environment, academic process and relationship between students and lecturer or staff.

Table 1: Description of Respondent's Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	196	55.5
Female	157	44.5
Total	353	100.0

Table 1 shows the different gender of respondents. Most of respondents are male which is 55.5% and the rest is female 44.5%. This selected respondent representing four departments in the Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Table 2: Description of Respondent's Race

Race	Frequency	Percent
Malay	325	92.1
Chinese	17	4.8
Indian	9	2.5
Others	2	.6
Total	353	100.0

Table 2 shows 92.1% of the respondents were Malay whereas 4.8% of the respondents were Chinese. 2.5% of the respondents were Indian and 0.6% of the respondents were others Ethnicity

which is Bumiputera. This selected respondents representing four department in the Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Table 3: Description of Respondent's Year of Study

Year of Study	Frequency	Percent
First Year	34	9.6
Second Year	25	7.1
Third Year	228	64.6
Forth And Above	66	18.7
Total	353	100.0

Table 3 shows 64.6% of the respondents were in Third Year of study whereas 18.7% of the respondents were in Fourth Year and above. 9.6% of the respondents were in the First Year of study and 7.1 of the respondents were in Second Year of study. This selected respondents representing four departments in the Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Table 4: Description of Respondent's Department

Department	Frequency	Percent
Commerce	98	27.8
Electrical Engineering	85	24.1
Mechanical Engineering	83	23.5
Civil Engineering	87	24.6
Total	353	100.0

Table 4 shows 27.8% of the respondents were from Commerce Department whereas 24.6% of the respondents were from Civil Engineering Department. While 24.1% of the respondents were from Electrical Engineering Department and 23.5% of the respondents were from Mechanical Engineering Department. This selected respondents representing four departments in the Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Table 5: Level of Interpretation Mean

Interpretation	Low	Moderate	High
Mean	1.00 – 2.33	2.34 - 3.67	3.68 – 5.00

Table 5 shows the level of interpretation mean according to Waraporn Thaima (2000). Factors that attract respondents either strongly satisfied, satisfied, neither agree nor disagree, dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied are based on the table.

Table 6: Mean Analysis: Level of student satisfaction towards learning environment at PSA

Item	Mean	Level
The environment at PSA is conducive for learning.	3.71	High
The lighting in the lecture theatres or classrooms is adequate.	3.76	High
External noise does not interfere with lectures or classes.	3.22	Moderate
Lecturer theatres or classrooms are adequate.	3.50	Moderate
The lecture theatres or classrooms are clean.	3.13	Moderate
There is enough desk (furniture) in the lecture theatres or classes.	3.49	Moderate
I am satisfied with the availability of ICT facilities at PSA.	2.29	Low
I am satisfied with the level of access of ICT facilities by students.	2.29	Low
I am satisfied with availability of relevant books, journals and other reading material connection with course in the library.	3.59	Moderate

From the table above, it is observed that several key areas need keen attention from head of departments and the management of PSA. The areas are; availability of ICT facilities at PSA (mean value of 2.29) and level of access of ICT facilities by students (mean value of 2.29). In addition, moderate level of means for several areas also need to be addressed by the responsible party. The areas are; external noise does not interfere with lectures or classes (mean value of 3.22), lecturer theatres or classrooms are adequate (mean value 3.50), lecture theatres or classrooms are clean (mean value 3.13), enough desk (furniture) in the lecture theatres or classes (mean value 3.49) and availability of relevant books, journals and other reading material connection with course in the library (mean value 3.59).

Results of mean analysis clearly reflect that students' are largely dissatisfied with the ICT facilities provided at PSA. Furthermore, there are also lesser satisfaction about the classroom environment and the availability of reference materials in the library. Overall, the students' satisfaction level towards learning environment at PSA were moderate with the mean 3.22.

Table 7: Mean Analysis: Level of students satisfaction towards academic process at PSA

Item	Mean	Level
Various teaching methods have been used (pair work, group work).	4.14	High
The curriculum taught at PSA is relevant.	3.82	High
The assessment criteria of courses have been explained to me at the beginning of the courses.	3.99	High
The time allocated for each lecture session is reasonable.	3.92	High
Academic advisors are available when needed.	3.97	High
Lecturer have extensive knowledge of their subject.	4.04	High
Lecturer are available for consultation.	3.87	High
Examinations result at PSA are processed and released on time.	3.65	Moderate
Examination-related issues are promptly addressed.	3.68	High
I get assessment result/mark within a reasonable period of time.	3.64	Moderate
I have the opportunity to give lecturers feedback on course.	3.75	High
I am satisfied with the course registration process at the start of new semester.	3.77	High

Based on the table above, most of the mean for the items are at a high level. The items are; various teaching methods have been used (mean value 4.14), the curriculum taught at PSA is relevant (mean value 3.82), the assessment criteria of courses have been explained at the beginning of the courses (mean value 3.99), the time allocated for each lecture session is reasonable (mean value 3.92), academic advisors are available when needed (mean value 3.97), lecturer have extensive knowledge of their subject (mean value 4.04), lecturer are available for consultation (mean value of 3.87), examination-related issues are promptly addressed (mean value 3.68), opportunity to give lecturers feedback on course (mean value of 3.75) and course registration process at the start of new semester (mean value 3.77).

These high value of mean should be maintained because it indicates that most of the students' are satisfied with the academic process in PSA. However, there is a room for improvement for several items such as examinations result are processed and released on time (mean value 3.65) and getting assessment result/mark within a reasonable period of time (mean value 3.64). This two areas need attention from lecturers and head of departments. Overall, the students' satisfaction level towards academic process at PSA were high with the mean 3.85.

Table 8: Mean Analysis: Level of students satisfaction towards relationship with lecturer or support staff at PSA

Item	Mean	Level
Lecturer and support staff are polite and courteous.	3.90	High
Lecturer and support staff responds to students queries or complain promptly.	3.78	High
Lecturer and support staff are concerned about student's welfare and interests.	3.74	High
Lecturer and support staff are willing to help with students concerns.	3.66	Moderate
There is appropriate communication channel between management and students.	3.59	Moderate
PSA staff are sympathy and reassuring when helping students.	3.51	Moderate
There is good rapport between staff and students.	3.56	Moderate
PSA staffs are warm, friendly and supportive of students.	3.51	Moderate
I can contact lecturers with minimum difficulty.	3.72	High
I feel comfortable approaching and talking to lecturers.	3.73	High

From the table above, it is clearly shows that most of the students' are satisfied with the relationship with lecturer or support staff at PSA. Half of the areas represented high level of mean value. The areas are; lecturer and support staff are polite and courteous (mean value 3.90), lecturer and support staff responds to students queries or complain promptly (mean value 3.78), lecturer and support staff are concerned about student's welfare and interests (mean value 3.74), contact lecturers with minimum difficulty (mean value 3.72) and comfortable approaching and talking to lecturers (mean value 3.73).

Meanwhile, there are several areas that can be improve by the lecturers / support staff and the management of PSA. The areas are; lecturer and support staff are willing to help with students concerns (mean value 3.66), appropriate communication channel between management and students (mean value 3.59), PSA staff are sympathy and reassuring when helping students (mean value 3.51), there is good rapport between staff and students (mean value 3.56) and PSA staffs are warm, friendly and supportive of students (mean value 3.51). Overall, the students' satisfaction level towards relationship with lecturer or support staff at PSA were moderate with the mean 3.67.

5.0 Conclusion

Overall result reveal that students are satisfied with learning environment, academic process and relationship with lecturer and support staff. On the other hand, students express dissatisfaction towards ICT facilities at PSA. Besides, the findings and data analysis shows that the cleanliness of lecturer theatres and classrooms can also be improved to make students more comfortable and focus in the class. Thus, the management of PSA should give more attention to improve the quality of learning environment at PSA such as improve the ICT facilities for students in order for them to easily access to internet for their learning requirement. In addition, lecture theatres and classroom also should be equipped with latest equipment and technology to meet with competitive learning environment.

Besides that, PSA should upgrade SPMP system to avoid from delay for students to get assessment result/mark within a reasonable period of time. Lastly, lecturer or support staff should maintain a good relationship with students such as makes activities with lecturer and support staff. Besides that, every week, students can find a suitable time to meet personal academic (PA) for keep good relationship.

This study is not without limitations. First, this study only focusing on Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah. Therefore, the findings in this study may not be able to generalise to other institutions. Secondly, the respondents of this study are only 353 selected by using simple random sampling. Future studies, could embark using a larger sample size.

In summary, the findings in this study provide the importance of conducive learning environment, an efficient academic process and enhance good relationship between students and lecturer or support staff. This is important to ensure the quality of services in educational institution is on a high level and meeting our inspiration to produce graduates who is adequately equipped to thrive in an increasingly global and competitive environment.

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