Alumni Satisfaction in Educational Institutions: Does the Quality Service Effect?

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In educational institutions, service management updates cause performance fluctuations and affect alumni satisfaction. This study aims to describe the role of service quality in alumni satisfaction. This quantitative research is based on service quality and alumni satisfaction factors. Data was collected from 451 random respondents. The measurement and structural models were analyzed. The model has a predictive relevance value at a moderate level, and we observed that only tangible factors have a significant effect on alumni satisfaction. Accordingly, staff need to make the best use of their time, conduct briefings before starting work, and additional training related to reliable service skills.

Keywords: influence, effect, alumni satisfaction, service quality

INTRODUCTION

One of the obstacles in managing higher education institutions, such as universities, is determining how to build public trust within the institution. To determine the strategy employed by institutions to build public trust, and identify the level of trust, it is necessary to conduct research related to this topic. It is important that the institution community, which includes students, graduates, and alumni, collaborate in such research as they are considered the direct customers of the institutions. The relationship between a university and the customer develops over time. It begins with new students experiencing student life and attending lectures, and ends with graduates who begin working in the educational community according to their competence. During this long experience, alumni may experience feelings of pleasure or displeasure, and ultimately feel satisfied or dissatisfied regarding certain aspects during their interaction with the university.

Customer satisfaction is important for organizational development and management, and for institutions to increase trust and loyalty from their customers. When the organization concerned is an educational institution or university, the raw materials, often referred to as inputs, are humans. Following the learning process, individuals will undergo various changes. They will start as students, but after

graduating, they are referred to as graduates, alumni, or outputs. If a graduate has started working in a field that is related to their abilities or competencies, they are referred to as an outcome.

Every organization needs to pay attention to customer satisfaction. The customer is anyone who requires products from the company concerned. For universities, customers are individuals who need the college, ranging from students to alumni. Therefore, it is necessary to manage student or alumni satisfaction in order to increase organizational trust in the eyes of the community or stakeholders. Many factors can affect the increase in customer satisfaction, however, in this study we focus on the service quality factor.

Customer satisfaction is the attitude or behavior of customers. If their expected needs are met, they will feel happy or satisfied. Conversely, if a customer's needs are not met, they will feel dissatisfied. Customer satisfaction needs to be maintained because it can have an impact on the level of trust the public has for the organization. To maintain customer satisfaction, continuous research should be performed.

Customer Satisfaction

During the consumer decision-making process, consumers do not stop at the consumption process but rather carry out an evaluation process of the product or service that they have received. This is referred to as an evaluation of post-purchase or post-consumption alternatives (Sugiono, Nurwulandari, & Junita, 2021). The result of this process is that consumers feel either satisfied or dissatisfied with the product or service(Subaebasni, Risnawaty, & Wicaksono, 2019). Satisfied consumers will most likely buy and re-use the product or service. Conversely, customers who are dissatisfied with the service or product will not purchase or use it again (Haeruddin & Haeruddin, 2020).

Companies should aim to create good customer satisfaction. The quality of service delivery is essential to achieve good customer satisfaction (Gajewska, Zimon, Kaczor, & Madzík, 2019; Li, Lu, Hou, Cui, & Darbandi, 2021). Customer satisfaction will increase a longs idea high quality of service provided by the company (Panigrahi, Azizan, & Waris, 2018). A high quality service will maintain a good relationship between the company and their customers. Customers who are happy with the service of a company tend to stay loyal to that company(Hasfar, Militina, & Achmad, 2020). In order to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty, good customer service is essential and will add more value to the companies products and services(Özkan, Süer, Keser, & Kocakoç, 2019). Consumer satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure to disappointment from comparing a brand's service, product, or performance. Satisfaction is sensed when services, products, or performance has exceeded consumer expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Customer satisfaction ranges from a feeling of pleasure to disappointment when assessing a company's service, product, or performance (Prasilowati, Suyanto, Safitri, & Wardani, 2021; Rusmahafi & Wulandari, 2020). Satisfaction is experienced when the service, product, or performance has exceeded the consumers expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2021). This is undoubtedly the golden mantra for customer satisfaction and will be the predecessor for gaining customer loyalty. Planning features of the product/service in accordance with the need of the customers will enhance the satisfaction of the customers, which in turn will increase repurchasing. It is vital for every e-retailer to maintain the quality of their online business, in view that service quality plays a vital role in customer satisfaction, which in turn develops customer loyalty (Sundaram, Ramkumar, & Shankar, 2017).

It can be concluded that customer satisfaction is the feeling experienced when the customers' expectations have been fulfilled. One way to fulfil this expectation is through customer relationship management (CRM), which involves reviewing the consumers' demands, customizing them and ultimately creating satisfaction (Goranda, Nurhayati, & Simanjuntak, 2021).

According to Kotler (2010), a company must measure the satisfaction of customers on a regular basis because the key to customer retention is customer satisfaction. The highly satisfied customers will maintain their loyalty to the company, buy more products, talk about the company and its products, show no interest in the products of competing companies, and are less sensitive to prices, and offer ideas about products and services so that the company can improve in these areas. In educational institutions, alumni are considered the customers.

Based on theoretical concepts, it can be concluded that customer satisfaction in an educational institution is a feeling or behavior of the customer after experiencing it firsthand as a student or alumni of

the institution. These feelings could include: pride in the institution or campus; comfort from the infrastructure and other facilities; a sense of responsibility to the profession/alma mater of alumni and tridharma of the institution to carry out learning, research and community service, and a sense of optimism in career development, management or leadership in the workplace.

Service Quality

Various organizational efforts are trying to improve customer satisfaction by improving the quality of the service provided to customers. Service is provided by the organization, through its employees, to the customers. This is a form of fostering customer trust, so that it will also have an impact on customer satisfaction. Many researchers believe that service quality, customer satisfaction, trust and the perceived value of the goods provided have a positive effect on customers' loyalty. However, there is some discrepancy in previous research(Tanisah & Maftukhah, 2015).

In general, service quality is a global attitude or assessment of the superiority of services, although the real scope of this attitude has no uniformity in opinion. Service quality is a multi-item scale with several questions that can be used to measure respondents' perceptions of service quality, namely: (1) physical evidence (tangibles), including physical facilities, equipment, employees and means of communication; (2) reliability, namely the ability of the staff to provide the promised service and provide satisfactory service; (3) responsiveness, the desire of the staff to help customers and provide responsive services; (4) assurance, including knowledge, ability, politeness, and trustworthiness of the staff, free from danger, risk and doubt, and (5) empathy, which is ease of relationship, good communication, personal attention and understanding of customers' needs (Rianti, Rusli, & Yuliani, 2019; Sari, Sunaryo, & Mugiono, 2018).

Sundaram et al. (2017) cited a study on the effect of quality of an e-service on customers trust and revealed that the relationship between service quality and customers trust is statistically significant as the former strongly and positively affected the customer trust in internet shopping.

Service quality within a service company is often conditioned as a comparison between the expected service and the service received. Companies that are able to provide a good service to their customers have the greatest chance of continued support from their customers. Service quality is an important instrument that will positively impact a customer's behavior. For example, a satisfied customer is likely to promote the company's products or services to others and remain loyal to that company.

In emerging markets such as Yemen, understanding service quality measurements and factors has become a vital issue to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty as well as acquire new profitable customers. Research done in Yemen's mobile telecommunications industry aims to address the service quality factor and the effect this has on customers' satisfaction and loyalty. They concluded that service quality starts with the customer's needs and ends with the customer's perception (Akroush, Dawood, & Affara, 2015). This implies that the companies' good image is not based on the point of view or perception of the company providing the service, but rather from the perception of its customers. It is essential to ensure that customers are satisfied with the products or services provide by the company because they are the ones who determine the service qualities (Daengs, Mahjudin, & Hufron, 2013).

Customers who receive products or services that meet or exceed their expectations, tend to give positive feedback regarding the company, through word of mouth to colleagues and friends, but also online via reviews. Word of mouth is an effective way to build a positive image for a school or the other company(Ruswanti, 2016).

Based on literature reviews, it can be concluded that service quality is an attitude of graduates or alumni as customers who have an assessment including:(1) tangibles,(2) reliability, (3) responsiveness, (4) assurance, and (5) empathy.

This research is expected to be useful for all parties, including the institution and the alumni (the customers). The purpose of this research is to describe the path analysis of service quality indicators on alumni satisfaction. These indicators include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Our data will indicate which of these indicators has the most significant influence on the satisfaction of an educational institutions' customers. This study will highlight the indication which has the weakest effect on alumni satisfaction so that remedial measures can be sourced to ensure a good service quality.

METHOD

This quantitative research uses an observational approach based on the second-order factor of service quality and the first-order factor of alumni satisfaction. The observed service quality refers to the five factors described by Rianti et al. (2019). First, the tangible factor which has the following indicators: appearance (X11), comfort (X12), convenience (X13), and the use of assistive devices (X14). Second, the reliability factor which includes accuracy (X21), clear service standards (X22), ability (X23), and expertise (X24). Third, the responsiveness factor which includes the following indicators: quick response (X31), precise (X32), careful (X33), timely (X34), and responding to service user complaints (X35). Fourth, the assurance factor including timely assurance (X41) and assurance of certainty (X42). Fifth, the empathy factor which includes the following indicators: prioritizing the interests of service users (X51), friendly manners (X52), non-discriminatory (X53), and respectful (X54). The observations on alumni satisfaction are Pride (Y1) and Comfort (Y2).

In this study, data were collected with valid and reliable instruments using a questionnaire form on a Likert scale through social media, which involved 55 alumni. The following are the results of the instrument validity test for both the alumni satisfaction variable and the service quality variable (Table 1).

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF INSTRUMENT VALIDITY ANALYSIS WITH PRODUCT MOMENT

Alumni Satisfaction Variable						Service Quality Variable					
Factor	Item	r_{count}	Factor	Item	r_{count}	Factor	Item	r_{count}	Factor	Itam	r_{count}
Pride (Y₁)	1	0.648	Respon-sibility (Y₃)	14	0.665	Tangible	1	0.643		14	0.902
	2	0.480		15	0.637		2	0.791		15	0.922
	3	0.776		16	0.671		3	0.733		16	0.828
	4	0.753		17	0.395		4	0.698	Assurance	17	0.907
	5	0.746		18	0.506		5	0.663		18	0.772
	6	0.625		19	0.598		6	0.874		19	0.764
Conveni-ence (Y₂)	7	0.598		20	0.682	Relia-bility	7	0.786		20	0.900
	8	0.611		21	0.637		8	0.742		21	0.910
	9	0.554	Optimism (Y₄)	22	0.693		9	0.827	Empathy	22	0.828
	10	0.447		23	0.707		10	0.879		23	0.805
	11	0.579		24	0.688		11	0.779		24	0.863
	12	0.534		25	0.623		12	0.938		25	0.878
	13	0.530				Respons-iveness	13	0.870			

With the critical values for the correlation coefficients table ($r=0.263$), it is concluded that each item in the instrument for the variables of alumni satisfaction and service quality is valid. Using the Cronbach's Alpha test, the coefficient for the alumni satisfaction variable was r=0.928, and for the service quality variable the coefficient was r=0.978. The reliability coefficients of the two variables are dependable. The questionnaire form with valid and reliable instruments was re-distributed via social media to institutional graduates in 2018-2020 from six study programs such as: English language education, mathematics, Pancasila and citizenship education, early childhood education, teacher education, sports education, and primary teacher education. The form was completed by 451 random respondents who graduated in 2018 (n=105), 2019 (n=184), and in 2022 (n= 162).

The data obtained were analyzed using path analysis techniques following the structural model pattern (Haryono, 2017). The evaluation was conducted on the measurement model and the structural model. The evaluation stages of the measurement model are: (1) composite reliability should be higher than 0.70 and considering Cronbach's alpha (α) as the lower bound and composite reliability (CR) as the upper bound, (2) the indicator's outer loadings should be higher than 0.70, (3) Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should

be higher than 0.50, (4) the square root of the AVE of each construct should be higher than its highest correlation with any other construct, or another alternative (Hair Jr, Hult,Ringle,& Sarstedt2021).

While the several stages for evaluating the structural model are: (1) the Variable Importance in Projection (VIP) value should be higher than 0.20 but trimming should be applied when the value is higher than 5; (2) include a bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of path coefficients with the minimum number of bootstrap samples (n= 5000); (3) bootstrapping confidence intervals provide additional information on the stability of path coefficient estimates; (4) coefficients of determination (R^2) and values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for the construct can be described as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively; (5) effect sizes (f^2)as for assessing an construct's contribution to latent variable's R^2 value, with the values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicating a construct's small, medium, or large effect, respectively; (6) use blind folding with the omission distance (D=7) to obtain cross-validated redundancy measures for each construct where the resulting Q^2 values larger than 0 indicate that the constructs have predictive relevance; (7) q^2 effect sizes as a relative measure of predictive relevance, q^2 values of 0. 02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate that the construct has a small, medium, or large predictive relevance, respectively.

FINDINGS

The correlation matrix is presented in the appendix. The results of the measurement model analysis are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
EVALUATION RESULTS OF THE MEASUREMENT MODEL AND VIP VALUE

Indicator	Loading	CR	α	AVE	VIP	Indicator	Loading	CR	α	AVE	VIP
Y_1	0.894	0.921	0.885	0.745	2.971	X_{31}	0.919	0.955	0.941	0.809	4.355
Y_2	0.919				3.372	X_{32}	0.924				4.280
Y_3	0.839				2.188	X_{33}	0.889				3.685
Y_4	0.794				1.763	X_{34}	0.850				2.562
X_{11}	0.880	0.929	0.898	0.766	2.590	X_{35}	0.913				3.957
X_{12}	0.871				2.491	X_{41}	0.963	0.966	0.929	0.933	4.029
X_{13}	0.851				2.332	X_{42}	0.969				4.029
X_{14}	0.899				2.924	X_{52}	0.952	0.958	0.933	0.883	4.981
X_{21}	0.857	0.952	0.932	0.831	2.365	X_{53}	0.924				3.219
X_{22}	0.923				4.233	X_{54}	0.942				4.437
X_{23}	0.925				4.425						
X_{24}	0.939				4.683						

Based on Table 2 we observe that: (1) the CR value of each variable is higherthan 0.70; (2) all outer loading values are higherthan 0.70; (3) AVE is higherthan 0.50; and (4) the square root of the AVE of construct (Y=0.863, X1=0.875, X2=0.912, X4=0.966, X5=0.940) is higher than its highest correlation (Y↔X1=0.792, X1↔X2=0.802, X2↔X3=0.912, X4↔X5 =0.912, and X5↔X4=0.912) with any other construct, but it is not for the square root of the AVE of X3=0.899 because the highest correlation with any other construct is X3↔X2=0.912. Hair Jr et al. (2021) stated that another alternative to assessing discriminant validity is cross-loadings. An indicator's loading (X31=0.919, X32=0.924, X33=0.889, X34=0.850, X35=0.913) on its assigned construct is higher than all of the highest cross-loadings (X31↔X2=0.869, X32↔X2= 0.858, X33↔X5=0.805, X34↔X2=0.761, X35↔X4 and X35↔X5=0.827) with other constructs.

One stage of the structural model evaluation analysis is the VIP value of less than 5. Oncethe data is analyzed, if the VIP value is higher than 5, trimming is applied. In the next analysis, the indicator that is

not included is X52 from the empathy factor with the results of the analysis (Table 2) showing that all VIP values are between 0.2 and 5.

The analysis in this study applies the trimming method once. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF PATH COEFFICIENTS ANALYSIS

Variable	Alumni satisfaction				
	β	Convidence Interval	t-value	p-value	f^2
Tangible	0.566	[0.458 – 0.674]	10.211	0.000	0.297
Reliability	0.154	[-0.008 – 0.316]	1.879	0.060	0.010
Responsiveness	0.049	[-0.116 – 0.207]	0.594	0.553	0.001
Assurance	0.056	[-0.119 – 0.225]	0.672	0.502	0.001
Empathy	0.025	[-0.152 – 0.199]	0.279	0.781	0.000
R^2	0.652				
Q^2	0.472				

Based on Table 3 we observe that: (1) tangibles have a significant effect on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.566, p<0.001); (2) the influence of reliability is not significant on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.154, p>0.05); (3) the effect of responsiveness is not significant on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.049, p>0.05); (4) the influence of assurance is not significant on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.056, p>0.05), and (5) the effect of empathy is not significant on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.025, p>0.05).

The value of R^2=0.652 indicates that 65.2% of the variance of alumni satisfaction can be explained by tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy with a moderate level of prediction. The results of the analysis also indicatethe f^2 value of the variables on alumni satisfaction: (1) tangibles f^2= 0.297, indicates a medium sized influence on alumni satisfaction; (2) reliability f^2= 0.010 indicates a very small effect size; (3 + 4) responsiveness and assurance have a f^2value of 0.001which indicates a very small effect size; (5) empathy f^2= 0.000 indicatesthat it has no effect on alumni satisfaction. In addition, the results of the model test show that the Q^2 value is higher than 0, which indicates that the model has a predictive relevance value.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, the tangible indicators had a significant effect on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.566, p<0.001). This means that partially and significantly Tangible has a positive effect on alumni satisfaction. This finding correlates to the finding from Ratnah & Muljadi (2018), which also show thatthe tangible variable significantly affects satisfaction and has asignificance level of0.000<0.05.

Reliability indicators have an insignificant effect on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.154, p>0.05). However, in the study focussing on GrabBike online transportation services by Lusiana, Pasda,Mustari,Ahmad,& Hasan (2020), their results show that the reliability variable has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction. The consumers were satisfied with the reliability of the services provided by GrabBike drivers. The expectations of the consumer before and after receiving a service from GrabBike services were met or exceeded.

Responsiveness has an insignificant effect on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.049, p>0.05), however, the results fromLusiana et al. (2020)show that the responsiveness variable has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction when using GrabBike online transportation services.

Assurance has no significant effect on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.056, p>0.05). These findings are supported by data from a study performed by Munusamy, Chelliah,& Mun (2010) thatshow that although

assurance has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction, this is not significant. Assurance refers to the certainty of something.

Empathy has no significant effect on alumni satisfaction (β_{direct}=0.025, p>0.05). The results of the research by Munusamy et al. (2010)suggest that there is no significant positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction. Although most customers or students like to use payment facilities through a bank, there are still groups of students who prefer face-to-face services provided by Cashier at schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, we can determine how to apply the implications of the research results to improve current efforts for the future. How to improve a more competent management system, to make services easier for students and alumni, to be more effective and efficient, so that the expected job targets can be achieved. According to the results of the study, tangible indicators have a significant effect on the satisfaction of alumni as customers. Thetangible indicators include physical facilities, employee equipment, and communication facilities. It is necessary to pay attention to policy implementers and evaluate, check and recheck that work equipment, and communication facilities, are in good working condition and suitable for use. If they are not, they should be updated or repaired immediately. It is possible to develop more sophisticated equipment so that the work will be more effective and efficient, and alumni satisfaction and trust will continue to increase.

We found that reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy had no significant effect on alumni satisfaction. This finding is important for staff or employee policy makers and highlights the importance for all staff to be given training in reliable service skills. Staff should follow a customer philosophy which includessmile, greet, and service and this should be included in staff or employee training. Policy makers need to include methods to improve daily staff attendance, and guide employees on how to make the best use of their time. It is also important to provide spiritual competence through workshops or coaching. This can be done through workshops or seminars, in order to increase employee motivation and aspirations, it can also be increased through discussions, or briefing by the leadership before starting work.

SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusion, the researchers submit several suggestions related to efforts to improve service quality. These recommendations are specific to tangible indicators which should be evaluated continuously. For example, equipment that is no longer working should be replaced immediately. The recommendations for indicators; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy for alumni, for that matter, employees can schedule when they will be given the opportunity to be trained. Therefore, policyholders must consistently provide training through seminars or debriefing before work in order to improve the competence and expertise of staff. Staff should feel responsible for the work they do.

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