

Perceptions of International Students on Service Quality Delivery

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore international students' perceptions on the service quality delivery at Universitas Hasanuddin. The method used is a qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques. Data was collected through interviews with the international students under the KNB scholarships, who were studying Indonesian language through BIPA program at Universitas Hasanuddin. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide which allowed researchers to explore participants' experiences and views in more depth. The findings of the study show that international students have varying perceptions of the quality of service they receive, with the majority assessing aspects of academic services, administration and campus facilities as quite adequate. However, there are several challenges related to communication, cultural understanding, and support in social and academic adaptation. This research recommends improving coordination between various parties at universities to improve services and better meet the needs of international students. It is hoped that these findings can become a reference for university administrators in designing policies that are more responsive to the needs of international students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has become an important sector in global development, and universities play a central role in producing quality human resources (Amin & Ahsan, 2019). In this era of globalization, higher education is no longer limited to geographical and political boundaries, but has become an international phenomenon. International students who come to other countries to continue their studies are an important part of the dynamics of global higher education. Universities that are able to attract international students are considered to have a good reputation and are able to provide a quality academic experience. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence international students' experiences while studying abroad, especially in terms of the quality of service they receive from these educational institutions. Meanwhile, the quality of service at universities is a crucial factor that influences students' learning experiences, especially international students (Smith & Lee, 2019). Good service is not only limited to academic aspects, but also includes various administrative services, social support, facilities, and intercultural interactions that can help students adapt to new environments (Nusair & Wang, 2019).

Universitas Hasanuddin, as one of the leading universities in Indonesia, is also an educational destination for a number of international students. This university has various study programs that attract students from various parts of the world, both for bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs. International students studying at Hasanuddin University have a variety of cultural backgrounds, languages and different educational systems, which influence their experience while in Indonesia.

Basically, international students who come to Indonesia to study at Universitas Hasanuddin come from various countries for various reasons. Some of the main reasons they choose Hasanuddin University include good quality education, affordable cost of living, and the opportunity to gain valuable international experience (Tran & Nguyen, 2020). In this case, service quality is an important element in providing a pleasant experience for international students. The quality of educational services at Hasanuddin University is related to various aspects involving

interaction between international students and the university. These aspects include: (1) the quality and relevance of teaching and learning, (2) campus facilities that support the learning process, (3) efficient administrative services, and (4) social and cultural support provided by the university to help international students adapt to the academic and social environment.

The quality of academic services is one of the main factors influencing international student satisfaction. Academic services include the quality of teaching provided by lecturers, the material presented, and the learning facilities available (Wong & Lee, 2018). Lecturers at Universitas Hasanuddin who have competence and expertise in their respective fields are expected to provide adequate academic experience. In addition, facilities such as comfortable classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and access to libraries and other academic resources greatly influence the quality of learning received by international students. However, there are often obstacles related to differences in curriculum and learning methods between universities in the student's home country and universities in Indonesia. These differences can create challenges for international students in understanding the material being taught. Therefore, it is important for Hasanuddin University to ensure that the quality of teaching and material delivered is in accordance with international standards and can be understood by students with various educational backgrounds (Pang & Chan, 2019).

Efficient and responsive administrative services are also an important factor in the international student experience (Kirk & Imran, 2019). Administrative processes related to registration, visas, accommodation and study permits can be a challenge for international students. If administrative services do not run well, this can cause frustration and inconvenience that negatively impacts the student learning experience. Universitas Hasanuddin has a variety of administrative services designed to assist international students in taking care of all their administrative needs. However, in practice, there are still several challenges related to understanding complex procedures, lack of clear information, or even language and cultural barriers that can affect the smooth running of administrative services. Therefore, this research also focuses on international students' perceptions of the administrative services they receive while at Universitas Hasanuddin.

The facilities provided by universities are also one element that greatly influences the experience of international students. Adequate campus facilities that can support students' academic and non-academic activities will provide comfort and convenience for them in living their daily lives (Ali & Mollah, 2020). Some important facilities for international students include dormitories, study rooms, laboratories, internet access and recreation areas. Apart from that, other facilities that can support the social and cultural integration of international students are various extracurricular activities that involve students from various countries (Murphy & Harper, 2021). This is important for expanding international students' social networks and helping them adapt to new environments.

One aspect that international students often face is the process of social and cultural adaptation. They have to adapt to customs, language and social systems that are different from their home countries. Therefore, social and cultural support from universities is very important to help international students face these challenges. Universitas Hasanuddin provides various forms of social and cultural support, such as providing information about social life in Indonesia, cultural events, as well as an international student community that can help them interact with local students and other international students. Additionally, psychological support is also important for international students who may experience feelings of loneliness or isolation in a new environment (Liu & Gao, 2020).

This study aims to explore and analyze international students' perceptions of the quality of services provided by Universitas Hasanuddin. The main focus of this study is to determine international students' views on various aspects of services, such as academic, administrative services, campus facilities, as well as the social and cultural support they receive. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses in these services, it is hoped that universities can improve the quality of services to meet the needs of international students more effectively.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which was well-suited for exploring the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of complex phenomena by focusing on participants' lived experiences and the meanings they ascribed to them (Yin, 2011). Specifically, the study utilized in-depth interviews to collect rich, detailed data on international students' perceptions of service quality at Universitas Hasanuddin. The participants in this study were international students who received Developing Countries Partnership (KNB) scholarships at Universitas Hasanuddin. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants, ensuring that they met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The primary criterion was that participants had completed the Indonesian language program (BIPA) prior to their academic studies. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to ensure that participants possess the knowledge and experience necessary to provide meaningful insights (Patton, 2015). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which are widely used in qualitative research to balance structure with flexibility (Creswell, 2013). This method allowed the researcher to explore key topics while also adapting questions based on participants' responses. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' perspectives on various aspects of service quality, including academic services, administrative processes, campus facilities, and social and cultural support. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, with the researcher meeting

participants directly at their locations. This approach facilitated rapport-building and allowed for the observation of non-verbal cues, which enriched the data (Yin, 2011). Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in data collection.

The interview data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The analysis process involved several steps. First, the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and thoroughly reviewed the transcripts to become familiar with the data. Next, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments of text related to the research questions. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that captured recurring patterns and key insights. Finally, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data and were relevant to the study's objectives. The thematic analysis process was iterative, with the researcher revisiting the data and codes multiple times to ensure rigor and reliability (Creswell, 2013). This systematic approach ensured that the findings were grounded in the data and provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perceptions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the data analysis, the international students' perceptions on the quality of service they receive at Universitas Hasanuddin came out with four main aspects, including: academic services, administrative services, campus facilities, and social and cultural support.

3.1. Perceptions of Academic Services

Academic services are one of the most important elements in determining the quality of international students' educational experience at Universitas Hasanuddin. Based on the results of interviews with international students who were respondents in this research, their perceptions of academic services at Universitas Hasanuddin varied, but the majority gave a positive assessment of the quality of teaching and academic support available. The majority of international students perceive the quality of teaching at Universitas Hasanuddin positively, noting that lecturers demonstrate adequate expertise in their fields and employ systematic and communicative teaching methods. Many students highlighted that lecturers are responsive to questions and willing to provide additional explanations when needed (Iaoli et al., 2023). However, some students reported challenges in understanding the material due to differences in teaching styles, which often reflect variations in educational systems and pedagogical approaches between Indonesia and their home countries. Most international students come from countries that have educational systems with different approaches both in terms of teaching techniques and theoretical and practical approaches. Apart from that, differences in the use of the language of instruction are also an obstacle. Although most of the lecture material is delivered in Indonesian, some international students find it difficult to understand lectures delivered in Indonesian, even though they already have basic knowledge of the language.

Most international students provide positive feedback regarding the relevance of the course material they receive. They feel that the existing curriculum is quite good and in line with global academic standards. Some students expressed that they gained deep insight into the topics they studied, and felt that the course material helped them understand the latest developments in their field of study (Kaur & Bhatti, 2021). However, some students want more frequent curriculum updates, including material that is more relevant to global needs and the latest industrial developments (Emynorane et al., 2024). They hope that universities can better adapt teaching materials to the challenges and opportunities that exist in the global market, including providing more in-depth knowledge about the latest innovations in technology, science and economics (Zainudin & Nor, 2021).

Access to adequate academic resources is also a determining factor in the quality of academic services. Based on the findings in this research, the majority of international students consider that Universitas Hasanuddin provides sufficient academic resources to support their learning process. Several international students stated that they had adequate access to libraries and electronic library resources which were important to support their studies. However, some students also feel that these resources are still limited, especially in terms of the number of references or scientific journals that are up to date and can be accessed easily. Access to international databases such as JSTOR, Elsevier, or ScienceDirect, even though they exist, is sometimes considered not fast enough or difficult to access for international students who want to obtain broader academic information (Faruk, 2022). Therefore, it is important for universities to continuously update and improve library facilities and electronic access so that international students can obtain relevant and up to date information in their field of study.

Finally, academic guidance and career counseling are important aspects that influence international students' perceptions of academic services. Some international students feel that the academic guidance they receive is good enough, especially when they need guidance regarding course selection, writing a thesis or thesis, and overall academic development (Haque & Sultana, 2020). However, there are also students who feel that they do not receive sufficient attention in terms of academic guidance, especially in terms of adapting to the existing curriculum and assistance in developing their research. On the other hand, career counseling and support to prepare international

students to enter the world of work is another concern. Several students expressed that they hoped the university could provide more programs and workshops related to career development.

3.2. Improving Administrative Services

Administrative services are an important aspect that plays a big role in creating a smooth and enjoyable experience for international students while studying at Universitas Hasanuddin. The administrative process includes various procedures that international students must go through, starting from initial registration, visa processing, accommodation arrangements, to administration related to lectures and graduation (Kirk & Imran, 2019). Good quality administrative services will facilitate various matters faced by international students, while inadequate services can cause frustration, confusion, and even affect their satisfaction with the university. Based on the results of interviews and data analysis, there are several areas in administrative services that need to be improved to provide a better experience for international students.

One of the problems often faced by international students is confusion in understanding the registration procedures and administrative requirements required before starting studies at Universitas Hasanuddin. Even though information about registration procedures is provided through the university website and other materials, some students feel that the information provided is not clear enough or not detailed enough, so they have difficulty preparing the necessary documents or understanding the steps that must be taken. Some students also expressed that they did not always receive proper guidance or sufficient information about important matters, such as visa procedures, re-registration, or the administrative processes they had to undertake after arriving in Indonesia. Especially for students studying abroad for the first time, this can be confusing and add pressure at the start of their studies (Mendoza & Serna, 2022).

The visa process for international students is an administrative aspect that often becomes a challenge. Even though Universitas Hasanuddin has a system to assist international students in processing visas, some students report that they face difficulties in understanding the visa application process, especially in terms of the documents required, the time required, and the procedures that must be followed. Some students felt that the process was not always transparent, and sometimes they received different information from the university and international office. Apart from that, there are also obstacles related to visa renewal which often has to be done every year (Aziz & Sharif, 2021). Some students felt that information regarding visa extensions was not provided clearly enough or not on time, so they experienced delays in the extension process which could affect their status as legal students in Indonesia.

3.3. Campus Facilities are Adequate but Need Improvement

Most international students are satisfied with the existing campus facilities, including comfortable classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and sports and recreation facilities (Patel & Sharma, 2020). However, some students also suggested improving facilities that are friendlier to international students, such as larger study rooms or meeting rooms to support their academic and social activities. Other supporting facilities such as fast internet networks and more sophisticated multimedia services are also things that the university needs to pay attention to so that students can learn more optimally.

Apart from that, accommodation facilities for international students are also in the spotlight. Even though there are dormitories provided, several students stated that the condition of the dormitories still needs improvement, both in terms of facilities and living comfort (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Comfort is one of the main factors in determining the quality of a residence. Many international students expressed that the quality of dormitory rooms needs to be improved in several aspects, such as more space, good lighting, sufficient air ventilation, and more modern equipment. Some students feel that the available dorm space is a bit tight, especially if there are two or more students sharing one room. This can reduce their comfort, especially in crowded situations or if they need private space to study or rest.

Another important thing to be considered also is the access to the internet. In today's digital era, fast and stable internet access is very necessary, both for academic and personal purposes (Pang & Chan, 2019). International students need internet access to do coursework, communicate with family and friends in their home country, and access relevant information. Some international students reported that internet connections in dormitories were sometimes unstable, especially during peak hours.

3.4. Social and Cultural Supports are Important for Adaptation

Social and cultural support has a very important role in the successful adaptation of international students in the academic and social environment. International students often face significant psychological, social, and cultural challenges when they move to a new country to continue their studies (Rahman & Ali, 2020). Therefore, the existence of strong social support and the provision of programs that support cultural integration are crucial factors in creating a positive and comprehensive educational experience. At Universitas Hasanuddin, as at many other institutions, international students not only deal with academic challenges, but also have to adjust to a social and cultural environment that is very different from their home countries. This adjustment often requires more than just academic

and administrative support, but also social support that can help international students feel welcome, comfortable, and emotionally supported on their journey.

Batra & Gupta (2022) stated that international students often face a number of challenges in their adaptation process, including: first, language and communication differences. Language is the main obstacle for international students in interacting with local students and lecturers. Even though many international students master English, it is not uncommon for them to face difficulties in communicating in Indonesian, especially in daily conversations outside of academic contexts. This may cause them to feel isolated or have difficulty building social relationships with local friends. Second, cultural differences. Indonesian culture, like the culture of other countries, has different characteristics from the culture of origin of international students. Aspects such as social interaction patterns, politeness norms, daily habits, and even way of dressing can be factors that confuse or influence the comfort of newly arrived international students. International students may find it difficult to adjust to these differences and risk experiencing a sense of social isolation. Third, feelings of loneliness and stress. Far from family and friends, international students often feel lonely, especially in the early stages of their arrival. Being separated from their familiar surroundings can cause feelings of nostalgia and stress. Sometimes, international students also face psychological problems such as anxiety or depression, which can be exacerbated by uncertainty about how to interact with others and how to overcome cultural differences. And finally, social limitations and involvement in campus activities. International students sometimes find it difficult to get involved in social and extracurricular activities due to language differences, lack of understanding of local culture, or lack of information about available activities. This can cause them to feel isolated and less integrated into the campus community (Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

Recognizing these challenges, sufficient social support is very important to help international students adjust to their new lives. This social support can come in various forms, whether from classmates, lecturers, or the university itself (Batra & Gupta, 2022). The form of social support that is really needed is an orientation program and cultural introduction. One of the best ways to support international students in the adaptation process is through an orientation program specifically designed to introduce them to local culture, the education system, and various services available at the university. An effective orientation program not only provides administrative information, but also provides a space for international students to interact with local students and university staff.

At Universitas Hasanuddin, the existing orientation program needs to be improved by integrating deeper cultural aspects, such as an introduction to local customs, typical food, and the daily habits of Indonesian society. Programs like this help international students feel better prepared to adapt to their social lives and foster a sense of mutual understanding between local and international students.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the result and discussions of this study, it can be concluded that although Universitas Hasanuddin has provided good services to international students, there are still several areas that need to be improved so that their learning experience is more optimal. Improving the quality of academic, administrative services, campus facilities, as well as social and cultural support will contribute greatly to international student satisfaction and can strengthen Universitas Hasanuddin's position as a more competitive international education destination. With continuous improvement, it is hoped that Universitas Hasanuddin can provide a better learning environment for international students, which in turn will contribute to the reputation and sustainability of the university's development on the global stage. Moreover, several recommendations can be given to improve the quality of services for international students at Universitas Hasanuddin, among others: (1) It is needed to continue aligning curriculum with international standards and adapting teaching methods to be more inclusive, taking into account the differences in academic and language backgrounds of international students; (2) It is needed to improve efficiency and transparency in administrative services, provide clearer and more accessible information, and ensure that administrative procedures are understandable for international students; (3) Improving the quality of campus facilities, such as study rooms, laboratories and internet networks, as well as improving accommodation conditions for international students to better support their academic and social activities; and (4) Universities can expand and enrich cultural and social orientation programs involving international and local students. In addition, strengthening counseling and psychological support services to help international students who face difficulties in adapting.

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