



# Determinants of Students Academic Satisfaction of Semarang State University Postgraduate Program

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### Abstract

Academic service is a service directly related to students, in which college shall, in this case UNNES Postgraduate Program, in providing services attempt to understand and meet students needs, and eventually leads to students perception. A quality academic service will satisfy students. This research aims at (1) describing and analyzing academic satisfaction and service quality (2) analyzing the contribution of service quality to students academic satisfaction (3) determining most dominant contribution to students academic satisfaction at Postgraduate Program, UNNES. This quantitative descriptive research employs multiple regression and correlation analyses. Primary data in relation to academic satisfaction and service quality variables as well as all of their dimensions are used in this research. The research results show that: (1) the academic satisfaction and service quality perceived and received by students of Postgraduate Semarang State University are good. Descriptively, the result of academic satisfaction of communication dimension is the highest, while tangible is the highest dimension of service quality; (2) the contribution of service quality to students academic satisfaction is 50.5%. The result is marked positive, which means that better service quality will improve students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program; and (3) the contribution of service quality of tangible dimension to students academic satisfaction is most dominant at UNNES Postgraduate program. Educational staffs, lecturers and chairman of UNNES Postgraduate Program are suggested to improve services in responsiveness dimension and how to respond to students in providing them services, since it is the lowest dimension with lower than point three or below the average. The service quality of tangible dimension should be continuously maintained since it makes the most dominant contribution to determining students academic satisfaction.

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## INTRODUCTION

UNNES Postgraduate Programs success as a colleges work unit is determined by the quality of services it provides, in which a quality service may be identified through customer satisfaction, in this case students as primary customer. Moreover, Cravens, 2009: 78, states that to achieve colleges role in development, it does not only educate young generation in preparing themselves to be men of development and to study and develop Science, Technology and Art needed by the society, but also to ensure that the Science, Technology and Art relevant to what development needs will be truthfully delivered to the society and useful as it should. Science, technology, and art will only be meaningful when they are widely acceptable to and useful for the people who need them to enhance their prosperity. Therefore, a college must ascertain itself, through various activities of its three pillars, to prove that its Science, Technology and Art are indeed relevant to, acceptable to and useful for the society in development.

Students academic satisfaction becomes quite important since it will make them loyal to the institution and willing to promote the institution to others, enhance the societys interest in continuing their education in that institution, enhance the institutions bargaining position, and improve the colleges image. For a college, academic satisfaction is oriented more in students since they are its primary customers. Students are directly related to all phases of educational mechanism in college, from input through selection process, intra- and extracurricular activities process to output.

Academic satisfaction is the compatibility between expectation and performance of academic service received by students. Including in students' academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program are academic service, course process, facilities and infrastructure, available information technology with access in conformance to students expectation, easy access to library in conformance to students expectation, thesis and dissertation counseling in

conformance to students expectation, and administrative and other information services related to Postgraduate program as a whole.

Students' academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program is determined by service quality perceived by students, and UNNES Postgraduate programs image. Academic service is a service directly related to students, thus college shall, in this case UNNES Postgraduate program, in providing services attempt to understand and meet students needs, and eventually leads to students perception. Quality academic service will satisfy students. The quality of a colleges academic services is determined by five main dimensions, namely: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, tangible, and assurance (Tjiptono and Chandra, 2005: 133-134).

Based on field facts related to academic services with UNNES Postgraduate Program, there are some complaints among students about lecturers and thesis (S2) or dissertation (S3) counselor. These complaints include: (1) it is difficult to meet some lecturers for counseling process, (2) frequently interrupted internet access in classroom, (3) socialization of journal publishing for students are perceived non-optimal and lacking, (3) services in break hour are not satisfying since students must wait for administrative staffs for services, (4) parking area is inadequate, there are constraints in writing scientific paper for doctoral students of waiting for international journal to publish. The gap between expectation and fact of service quality and students academic satisfaction with the Postgraduate Program as its primary customer needs empirical study through research.

From the basic concept of customer satisfaction, a college is basically a service industry which provides education services aiming at providing its customers (students) satisfaction. According to Tilaar (2002: 11), colleges are currently faced with demand for quality and accountability of educational services they provide. Colleges accountability is an effort to be accountable for all of study

program activities it manages, both legally and morally, to related parties, either in the form of failure or success. This accountability will always be associated with the effort to enhance education quality and customers trust in study program and college. Consequently, quality services must be provided to satisfy its customers. Quality, according to Juran (1999), is the conformance to purpose and benefit. Meanwhile, according to Sallis (2012: 56), it is something which satisfies and exceeds customers needs and desire. Another opinion of quality is that proposed by Crosby as quoted by Sallis (2012: 111) as zero defects. Zero defect products may be created through quality assurance. Quality assurance is consistent fulfillment of product specifications. In relation to educational world at college, quality is the conformance of college products in the form of services to specifications. These specifications are determined by students as its primary customers. Academic satisfaction will be achieved when the given services meet customers needs and expectation. If education services are not satisfying, students will be disappointed. On the contrary, if they are satisfying, customers will be satisfied. Academic service is an education service with the biggest portion at college. Education quality in perception is the satisfaction of given academic services (Sallis, 2012: 7).

Satisfaction is always closely related to quality. Quality will be realized with good management. Similarly, quality dimension becomes something important in education. Sallis (2012: 6) proposes that a quality education management is integrated based on customer satisfaction. This satisfaction is measured from the compatibility between expected quality and perceived quality. Related to the satisfaction here is satisfaction in education services, including academic satisfaction of academic services given by college.

*Students satisfaction of service quality in Education can measured from perception and expectation of performance* (Joseph, 1997: 15). This education service includes academic service, which is of the biggest portion in education

service. Therefore, academic satisfaction can be measured from the compatibility between students expectation and perception and the performance of academic service they received.

Colleges are currently demanded to provide quality and accountable education service. Having quality means it conforms to the designated quality standards and accountable means it can be accounted for. A strategy deemed appropriate is to employ an integrated quality in education world to put it as a service industry (Sallis, 2012: 6). This is meant to be an institution to provide its customers quality services aiming at satisfying them.

Students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program in this research is the compatibility between students expectation and existing facts in relation to the quality of UNNES Postgraduate Programs services. The indicator of students academic satisfaction with UNNES Postgraduate Program in this research is the compatibility between expected and factual course process, easiness of access, thesis or dissertation proposal to writing counseling process, satisfaction of services given by administrative staff with UNNES Postgraduate Program, and comfort of orderly environment at UNNES Postgraduate Program.

Colleges quality academic services should be adjusted to its customers needs. If the given academic services are satisfying, students will be satisfied. But on the contrary, if they are not satisfying, students will not be satisfied (Tampubolon, 2001: 70). Students academic satisfaction is the purpose of provision of quality academic services, including five dimensions, namely tangible, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. Tangible here means the availability of comfortable and adequate facilities and infrastructures at UNNES Postgraduate Program. Responsiveness is related to staffs or employees attitude in giving students assistance with regard to information related to course implementation and schedule. Responsiveness is related to Postgraduate staffs or employees response to students difficulty in the implementation of course and counseling processes as they need. Empathy is related to

appreciation and supports for students with regard to academic field as a whole. Finally, assurance is related to competent lecturers and employees in giving satisfying services.

The awareness of quality starts from identification of consumers requirements to initiation of ideas of product or service concept until after-purchase period. Service quality is to what extent a service is given in conformance to customers specifications (Lupiyoadi, 2006: 175). Lupiyoadis opinion is in line with Gasperzs. According to Gasperz (2002: 15), service quality is to what extent a service received by consumers conforms to their expectation. A service quality approach highly depends on quality management system approach.

*Service quality based on ISO 9000 is the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements.* The requirements in this case mean the *need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory* (Rothery, 1993: 12).

In relation to the service quality dimension, Perasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1998: 13-15) propose five dimensions in the measurement of service quality (SERVQUAL), which are a summary of the 6 dimensions proposed by Gasperz. The five dimensions are: (1) tangible; (2) reliability; (3) responsiveness; (4) assurance; and (5) empathy.

In research of service quality, including research of colleges services, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1998: 13) propose five dimensions, namely: (1) tangible; (2) reliability; (3) responsiveness; (4) assurance; and (5) empathy. Tangible is related to the display and capability of facilities and infrastructure belonging to the institution or, in this research, UNNES Postgraduate Program. Reliability is related to the capability to provide services as promised accurately and trustworthily. Responsiveness is the discretion to help and

provide students services quickly and appropriately. Assurance is related to the knowledge, politeness, and capability of employees and leaders in fostering students trust. Meanwhile, empathy means giving students sincere and individual or personal concern and attempting to understand students desire.

## METHOD

Primary data are used to support this research, obtained through questionnaires distributed to students. The population is 981 Postgraduate students of 2015 even semester taken on a cross sectional basis by employing a purposive sampling technique. The samples are 100 students who actively take course and conduct counseling with lecturers. A regression analysis with regression model is employed to analyze students academic satisfaction and dominant service quality dimensions of with UNNES Postgraduate Program.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Description of Service Quality with UNNES Postgraduate Program

UNNES Postgraduate Programs service quality means the value given by the customers (students) of to what extent UNNES Postgraduate Programs services are given in conformance to customers/students expectation. Service quality is measured with five dimensions, namely: (1) *tangible*; (2) *reliability*; (3) *responsiveness*; (4) *assurance*; (5) *empathy*. The results are descriptively presented below.

**Table 1.** Description of Results of Measurement of UNNES Postgraduate Programs Service Quality

|                 | Tangible | Reliability | Responsiveness | Assurance | Empathy |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Service Quality | 3.32     | 3.15        | 2.89           | 3.25      | 3.17    |

Source: Processed data, 2017

**Table 2.** Description of Service Quality di UNNES Postgraduate Program

| Remark    | Tangible | Reliability | Responsiveness | Assurance | Empathy |
|-----------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Very good | 49       | 32          | 12             | 46        | 35      |
| Good      | 45       | 57          | 71             | 49        | 53      |
| Average   | 6        | 11          | 17             | 5         | 12      |
| Poor      | 0        | 0           | 0              | 0         | 0       |
| Total     | 100      | 100         | 100            | 100       | 100     |

Source: Processed data, 2017

The description may be explained with a 1-4 measurement scale of service quality with tangible dimension as the highest and responsiveness as the lowest dimension. Meanwhile, each of the reliability, assurance and empathy dimensions are above point three,

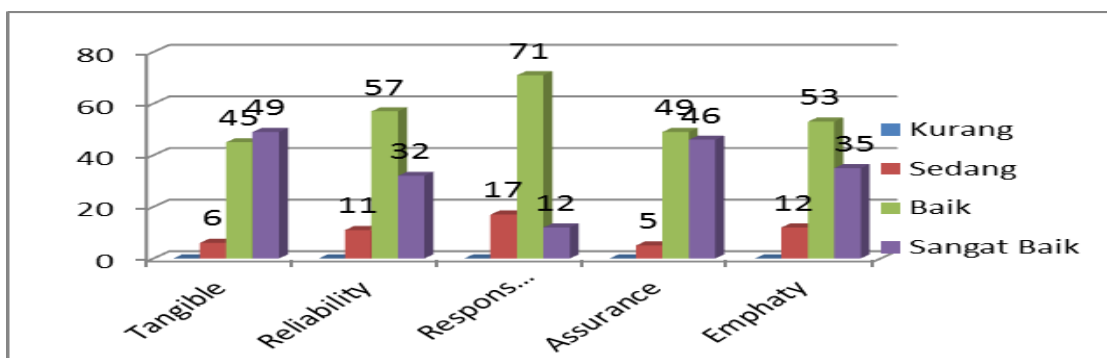
which means that in overall, the service quality perceived by UNNES Postgraduate students is good. Moreover, the description of UNNES Postgraduate Programs service quality of each dimension is presented in the bar diagram below.



**Figure 1.** Bar Diagram of Quality of Services Given to UNNES Postgraduate Students

The description of service quality of all dimensions may be illustrated in a bar diagram, presented in the figure below.

**Quality of Services Given to UNNES Postgraduate Students**

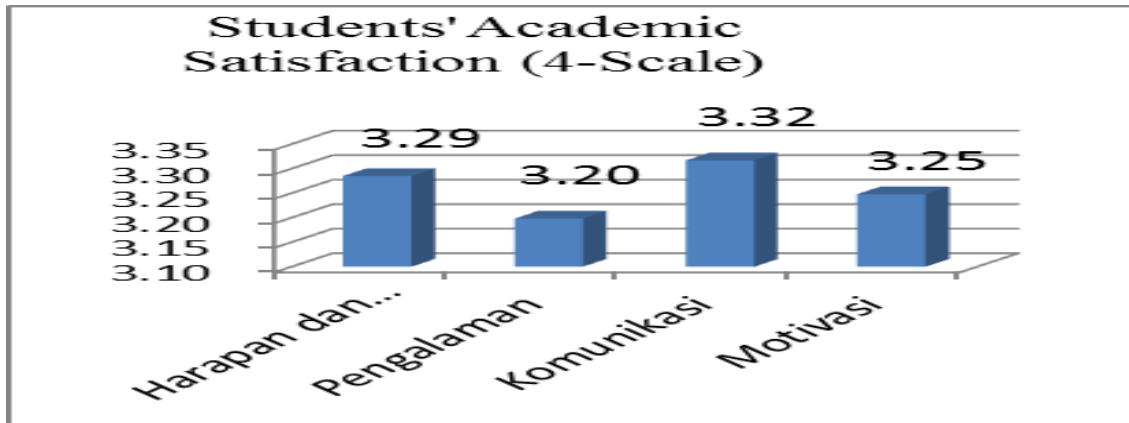


**Figure 2.** Description of Quality of Services Given to UNNES Postgraduate Students

**Description of students' academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program**

Students academic satisfaction means the compatibility between students expectation and existing facts with regard to UNNES Postgraduate Programs service quality.

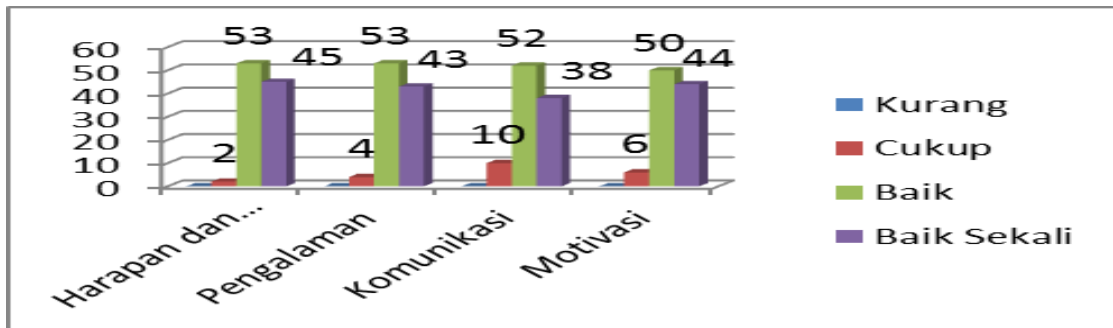
Descriptively, the academic satisfaction perceived and received by UNNES Postgraduate students is good or satisfying. The description of students academic satisfaction is presented in the bar diagram below.



**Figure 3.** Bar Diagram of UNNES Postgraduate Students Academic Satisfaction

The description of students academic satisfaction of all dimensions is presented in the figure below.

Students Academic Satisfaction



**Figure 4.** Description of Students' Academic Satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program

**Results of Correlation Analysis on Service Quality and Students' Academic Satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program**

**Table 3.** The result of analysis on causality relationship of students academic satisfaction determined by service quality.

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |        |      |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t      | Sig. |
| 1     | (Constant) | 17.132                      | 6.438      |                           | 2.661  | .009 |
|       | Service    | .725                        | .072       | .713                      | 10.078 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Satisfaction

Source: Processed data, 2017

**Table 4.** Model Summary.

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .713 <sup>a</sup> | .509     | .504              | 7.23547                    |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality

Source: Processed data, 2017

This result shows that students academic satisfaction is determined by service quality, with  $R^2$  value of 0.509 or 50.9%. The result is positive and significant. This result is viewed from each dimension of service quality on students academic satisfaction, and the causality relationship is as follows.

**Table 5.** Coefficients

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |                |                             |            |                           |       |      |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model                     |                | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |       |      |
|                           |                | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t     | Sig. |
| 1                         | (Constant)     | 18.070                      | 6.424      |                           | 2.813 | .006 |
|                           | Tangible       | 1.162                       | .420       | .330                      | 2.763 | .007 |
|                           | Reliability    | 1.224                       | .478       | .310                      | 2.560 | .012 |
|                           | Responsiveness | 1.060                       | .618       | .136                      | 1.715 | .090 |
|                           | Assurance      | 1.039                       | .522       | .215                      | 1.988 | .050 |
|                           | Empathy        | .816                        | .407       | .221                      | 2.005 | .014 |

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Satisfaction

Source: Processed data, 2017

The results of analysis on service quality on students academic satisfaction may be explained in detail as follows.

1. Service quality of tangible dimension on students academic satisfaction
2. The analysis on service quality of tangible dimension results in positive output with standardized coefficient of 0.330 and Adjusted  $R^2$  value = 0.403 or 40.3%. This means that the higher the tangible (physical facilities for academic activities), the higher the students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program is.
3. Service quality of reliability dimension on students academic satisfaction
4. The analysis on service quality of reliability dimension results in positive output with standardized coefficient of 0.310 and Adjusted  $R^2$  value = 0.367 or 36.7%. This means that the higher the reliability, the higher the students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program is.
5. Service quality of responsiveness dimension on students academic satisfaction
6. The analysis on service quality of responsiveness dimension results in positive output with standardized coefficient of 0.136 and Adjusted  $R^2$  value = 0.127 or 12.7%. This means that the higher the responsiveness (to respond to and responsiveness in serving students), which is the discretion to help and provide students services quickly and appropriately, the higher the students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program is.

7. Service quality of assurance dimension on students academic satisfaction
8. The analysis on service quality of assurance dimension results in positive output with standardized coefficient of 0.215 and Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value = 0.346 or 34.6%. This means that the higher the assurance, the higher the students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program is.
9. Service quality of empathy dimension on students academic satisfaction
10. The analysis on service quality of empathy dimension results in positive output with standardized coefficient of 0.221 and Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value = 0.349 or 34.9%. This means that the higher the empathy giving students sincere and individual or personal concern, the higher the students academic satisfaction of UNNES Postgraduate Program is.

### Discussion

Students academic satisfaction is the reflection between expectation and facts perceived by students in studying with UNNES Postgraduate Program. Descriptively, students academic satisfaction shows good or satisfying result with measurement value above point three of a four-scaled measurement. Of the four dimensions, the mean is 3.27, which means that the students have good level of academic satisfaction. The dimension to form the highest academic satisfaction is communication, which means that communication at UNNES Postgraduate Program is easily accessed by students, either related to course, counseling with lecturer or academic communication related to education staffs. The experience in taking study forms the lowest academic satisfaction. The motivation dimension serves to be a persons internal condition (inner state) which encourages, activates or drives and directs or forwards attitude toward objectives, in this case in completion of study in time with a strong self-drive.

Service quality is the characteristics of a product or service determined by customers, of which output is obtained through a process measurement. Service process has a broad meaning, from admission with UNNES Postgraduate Program until graduation. The one to form the highest service quality is the tangible dimension, which is related to physical form like quality academic service process pursuant to procedure determined manually or online. This includes the availability of adequate and supporting facilities and infrastructure for a comfortable and peaceful learning process.

Responsiveness is the dimension to form the lowest service quality. Responsiveness is related to reflection of discretion to help and provide responsive and appropriate services to customers by giving clear information. The students perceive that the response to services is good, like in proposal application for counselor, that some state that it is less than what they expect. Reliability is related to a companys capability to provide services as promised accurately and trustworthily. Reflection empathy is related to respect and support for students with regard to academic field as a whole, and in this case is perceived good by the students.

The contribution of service quality to students academic satisfaction is 50.4%, positive and significant. The mark positive means that if service quality is increasing, students academic satisfaction will also increase. This conforms to what Tampubolon state about College, then a quality academic service is adjusted to what customers need. If the given academic service is satisfying, students will be satisfied. On the contrary, if it is not satisfying, students will not be satisfied (Tampubolon, 2001: 70).

Service quality of tangible dimension contributes to students academic satisfaction for 40.3%. The contribution of tangible dimension is the highest one to students academic satisfaction. This tangible is in the form of facilities and infrastructure for course pursuant to students expectation. Meanwhile, the lowest contribution is of responsiveness dimension at 12.7%. This finding indicates that UNNES



Postgraduate Program responds less quickly in giving services.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

Service quality is service given to students pursuant to their needs during their study with UNNES Postgraduate Program, measured through *tangible*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy* and has good mean. Students academic satisfaction is the compatibility between students expectation and facts related to UNNES Postgraduate Programs service quality. Students academic satisfaction is measured through expectation and fact dimensions, experience in taking study, and communication and motivation, all of which provides good mean, which means that the academic satisfaction perceived or received by students is good.

The contribution of service quality to students academic satisfaction is 50.4%, positive and significant. The positive mark may be interpreted that if service quality is increasing, students academic satisfaction also increases.

The contribution of service quality of tangible dimension is physical form and manifestation like facilities, AC, course building, discussion room, counseling room, and access to internet, which makes the highest or most dominant contribution at 40.3%. The result of service quality of tangible dimension is marked positive, which means that if the physical form is better and more adequate and easily accessed by students, students academic satisfaction will increase and conform to their expectation during their study with UNNES Postgraduate Program.

### Suggestion

For education staffs and chairman of UNNES Postgraduate Program, based on the analysis result and finding, services of responsiveness dimension need to be improved, constituting the responsiveness and how to respond to students in providing them services, since it is the lowest dimension with point less than three or below the average.

For the Directors of UNNES Postgraduate Program, services need to be maintained, particularly in the tangible dimension and any dimension which may make students most dominant academic satisfaction.

For lecturers in lecturing and counseling, to respond better and improve their services for students proportionally in regard with their assigned tasks.

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