



STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON SERVICE QUALITY OF IIUM: STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

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[ABSTRACT

Services in a university may be of academic, administrative, IT and others. To compete successfully in the global education world, a university must have to know the customers' (students') perception regarding the services provided to them. And because the international students take a vital place in the education world and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is an international university, the researchers took IIUM as a sample organization and the Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS) as the sample faculty from where seven students were selected purposively as sample respondents. Interviews were conducted by using a semi-structured questionnaire and the interviews were recorded in an audio recorder by taking permission. Students were free to express their opinion and experiences. From the study, the researchers found that all the respondents are somehow satisfied with the service quality of IIUM. But they also showed their dissatisfactions in many cases and they also made some recommendations to improve the service quality. All of the points put forward by the participants, can be categorized into four, academic- lecturer, teaching method, evaluation criteria, and library facility; administrative- clerical services from all the relevant offices; IT- internet access, Wi-Fi connectivity, online library access; and others- infrastructure, logistics, medical facilities, scholarship and financial supports, accommodation facilities, transportation facilities, and so on. It is also found that most of the students are satisfied with the library facilities, some are satisfied with some of the lecturers and their teaching methods. In the case of dissatisfaction, most of the students are dissatisfied with the IT services and on scholarship and research project services. The findings of this study would not be generalised, but it could be a good reference for further research.]

Key Words: Students' perception, service quality, academic services, administrative services, satisfaction, dissatisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Service quality is a feature of the literature in marketing and operations management, but also gain attention in higher education (Susan & McDaniel, 1997). In order to attract customers, serve their needs and retain them, service providers and researchers are actively involved in understanding consumers' expectations and perceptions of service quality. The educational literature suggests that there is mounting pressure from the customers of higher education, which include students, parents, alumni, employers and legislators, to close the widening gap between their expectations of institutional performance and the actual performance (Brigham, 1994). Therefore, it is imperative that business schools actively monitor the quality of their services and commit to continuous improvements in an effort to respond to the needs of the institutional constituencies (Susan & McDaniel, 1997).

International students have an importance in today's higher education sector. Many developed nations have taken some significant means to attract them. Malaysia has also recognized the importance of the international students and to attract them, the universities along with the Govt. of Malaysia have also been



taking some significant measures. As of 2009, Malaysia had 2% of the world's international students and was ranked the world's 11th most preferred destination for education. In 2010, Malaysia was in the top ten countries into consideration of the number of international students (Njie et al, 2012). Therefore, Malaysia is a strong force in international education and this sector is also an important source of earnings. For these reasons, they need to examine and evaluate the satisfaction level and the perception of the international students on the service quality of the educational institutions and take some steps to satisfy them treating as customers.

With the focus on total quality management (TQM) and continuous improvement (CI) as ways to improve quality, the researcher takes a preliminary look at the Kulliyah (Faculty) of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS) of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) which has just begun to implement TQM and CI principles. Researcher reports here on a study of the perceptual experience of the international postgraduate students of KENMS regarding service quality of IIUM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality is one of the competing priorities which have migrated from the literature of manufacturing strategy to the service arena. The arrival of TQM in higher education began tenuously in the 1980s within creasing interest in the former 1990s. While in that respect appears to be substantial support for TQM in the academy, many, particularly faculty, are deeply cynical about it and are reluctant to exchange. This scepticism and inertia by core academic units within colleges and universities is fuelled by recent reports that TQM has failed to produce its promised results in the industry. While the track record of TQM in higher education is uncertain, the current thinking is clear: learn from the mistakes and accomplishments of previous practitioners in industry while moving forward with TQM efforts (Susan & McDanie, 1997). Jesus et al. (2013) identified the students' perceptions of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)'s service quality as a multi-dimensional paradigm shaped by four factors (1) Core business: teaching, (2) Facilitative or administrative services, (3) Support services and (4) User interface.

The core business, also called teaching, consists of ten indicators which include the lecturers' knowledge, experience and pedagogical capacity, the feedback that students get from tutors on activities that students carry out, the speed and efficiency of teaching-related query-solving, the contribution to learning of the activities carried out throughout the course (practical, assignments, exercises, debates, etc.), the structure, objectives and characteristics of the program, the format and content of didactic materials and resources, student guidance (e.g., providing study techniques, and academic and professional guidance), the assessment system's consistency with program objectives and activities carried out throughout the course, the friendliness and courteousness of lecturers in their dealings with students and the assessment system itself.

The factor, facilitative or administrative services, comprises of the speed and efficiency of solving administrative queries, incidents and problems (enrolment, delivery of documentation); the ease of communicating problems, complaints and queries (phone service, online assistance); the speed and efficiency of solving IT queries, incidents and problems (connection, viruses, etc.); the simplicity and clarity of administrative procedures (e.g., enrolment and dossier management); the friendliness and courteousness of the institution's administrative staff in their dealings with students; and finally, the fulfilment of administrative documentation delivery deadlines (certificates, degree certificates, etc.).

Supplementary services include supplementary services (job bank, internships in firms or institutions, extracurricular activities); synchronous activities (such as videoconferences or chats); face-to-face



activities (meetings, conferences, face-to-face tutorials, etc.); and virtual spaces for student interaction such discussion forums and groups.

User interface indicates the speed of navigation, of web-page loading, and of file uploads and downloads; the ability to connect to the campus quickly at all times; the robustness of the campus (whether it crashes when web pages are loading, or when files are being uploaded or downloaded); and the simplicity and intuitiveness of campus navigation.

Quality of educational services depends on 5c's namely Commitment of top management, Course delivery, Campus facilities, Courtesy and Customer feedback and improvement (Sakthivel et al., 2005). Khodayari & Khodayari (2011) mentioned in their paper that the quality of education depends on five dimensions which consist of 36 sample items. The five dimensions are Academic resources, Competence, Attitude, Content, Reliability and responsiveness, and Assurance and empathy.

Ramaiyah et al (2013) conducted a study and it was a comparative study among different dimension of service quality. At the end of the day, they concluded that the dimensions of service quality should reflect the customers' expectations and perceptions in total. Students as a customer, should be the determinant of the dimension of service quality rather than the staff or the academics. Service quality dimensions cover broad range of area and items. Students' perceptions and expectations on the service quality are complex, different and subjective. Therefore, it is suggested that the researchers test the validity and reliability of the chosen dimensions before drawing any conclusion from the research findings.

Hanaysha et al (2011) conducted a study on to judge the relationship among the dimensions of SERVQUAL and student's satisfaction. At the end of the study they may comment on their findings. The results indicated that both groups of students, i.e. international and domestic students, have strong relationship with depending variable. Furthermore, the effects of the study declared that the areas of the university's services quality that attain the necessities and needs of students and their expectations have better potential to establish solid relationship with student satisfaction. The results as well indicate that generally higher learning institutions' pupil are satisfied with the service quality performed by the Malaysian learning institutions, i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In other words, Malaysian learning institutions have successfully implemented their strategic improvement service quality. It is an important information to build market positive perception on Malaysian learning institutions in serving its customers. It will leverage customers' intention and make awareness of Malaysian learning institutions' quality, especially for foreign scholars. It is one of the principal sections of Malaysian Higher Education Ministry's strategic platform, which is to pull as many international students as possible to study in Malaysian universities. Therefore, it is important for Malaysian higher learning institutions to work continuously towards ensuring that the service offered can really play or get past the expectation of students. For those are able to practice it, will have the advantage to be more competitive and resilient? It is not about big or small but the amphetamine. Small higher learning institutions, which can create a fast and better decision, have better potential to increase their market share. By doing thus, higher learning institutions from Malaysia can become a major power in the industry at both Malaysia and ASEAN market.

Malik et al (2010) conducted a study on 240 students and the results show that students are overall satisfied with services of tangibility, assurance, reliability and empathy but not much satisfied with parking facilities, computer labs, cafeteria services, complaint handling system.

Njie et al. (2012) conducted a survey on the international students of a public university in Malaysia. The findings of the study show that the university is respected for its environmental friendly vegetation,



abundant facilities and several policies and regulations related to its environment, but they also show gaps between the powerful policies and their application; the results also suggest the differences in empathetic and execution of services, requiring empathy in today's education world, between senior staff and their junior counter parts as well as interpretation of understandings of services encountered by international students.

Sumaedi et al. (2012) conducted a study on 255 state university students from two states in Indonesia. The result shows that seven perceived service quality dimensions are considered significant to university students, i.e. curriculum, facilities, contact personnel, social activities, education counsellors, assessment, and instruction medium. The perceived service quality dimensions paying most towards overall perceived service quality. Moreover, the research also demonstrates that university students with a different study period have a diverse perceived quality level on the social activities dimension, though university students with different gender have a different perceived quality level on two dimensions, i.e. social activities and facilities.

Hill (1995) conducted a study on the university students on their expectations and perceived quality of education among the university students and pre university students. The result shows that the study climaxes the need for Higher Education Organizations (HEOs) to collect data on students' expectations – not only during their time at university, but at the point of entrance and, if possible, previously; the need to manage students' expectations from enrolment through to graduation, in order to line up them as closely as possible with what can be conveyed by way of service quality; the need for the student assessment procedure, or uphill evaluation, to be dealt with in a much more comprehensive, complete and multi-focused way than tends to be the case currently at many British universities.

Joseph & Joseph (1997) conducted a study on New Zealand business students' perceptions of service quality in education. Describes a study in which the respondents identified seven determinants of service quality. The determinants are Academic reputation, Career opportunities, Program issues, Cost/time, Physical aspects, Location and Other. Program issues consists of Options available, Flexibility to move within school of study, Degree provides flexibility, Specialist programs provided, Flexible entry requirements, Practical component in degree; Academic reputation includes Reputable degree, Excellent instructors, Excellent academic facilities; Physical aspects/cost consists of Reasonable cost of accommodation, Excellent accommodation facilities, Excellent sports and recreational facilities, Reasonable cost of education; Career opportunities includes Graduates easily employable, Excellent information on career opportunities; Location includes Ideal location, Excellent campus layout and appearance, Time includes Acceptable length of time to complete degree; and Other includes Family and peers influence university choice, Word of mouth influences the choice of universities.

The faculty is seriously committed in fulfilling the requirement of the Quality Assurance Standard regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia. One important aspect that must be seen and proven is the effort and commitment of the faculty to review regularly the quality of education and services given to the students. For a quite long time there is no special study focusing on the quality of education taking into overall evaluations particularly from students' perspective. It is high time to know the current status and level of service quality in education (Jusoh et al., 2004).

RESEARCH GAP

From the above literature review it is clear that few studies have been conducted in the same area, but in different countries. One study has been conducted in Malaysia but not on the students' perception on the service quality of IIUM. Hence, there is a research gap and to minimize this gap, the researcher has conducted this present study.



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the present paper are:

1. To explore the impression of the international post-graduate students on service quality of IIUM.
2. To identify the factors of service quality which ensure students' satisfaction at IIUM.
3. To analyse the reasons which cause dissatisfaction of the students on the service quality of IIUM.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A Qualitative Research method was used to conduct the study and a special type of purposive sampling-maximum variation sampling (MVS) was employed to select the sample postgraduate (PG) students as interviewees. They were taken from three regions- Asia, Africa and Middle East. Students were selected from all the departments of KENMS who have passed at least two years in IIUM and the sample included both male and female students.

For interview, a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of the four main questions, was used and on the basis of the discussion, if the interviewer felt, used one or more sub-questions. The main interview questions were:

- 1) What are your views on the service quality at IIUM?
- 2) Think about a situation when you are satisfied with the service. Describe the situation and explain why you are satisfied.
- 3) Think about a situation when you are dissatisfied with the service quality. Describe the situation and explain why you are dissatisfied.
- 4) What will be your suggestions about how IIUM can improve its service quality?

In response to the questions, some respondents took more time and some of them took comparatively less time.

The conversation was recorded on an audio tape, because that method much less distracted and accurately received the proceedings during the entire session. Before recording the voices, a prior consent was taken from the interviewees. The following paragraphs exhibit the detailed steps that were followed by the researchers for analysing the collected qualitative data. All of the steps were conducted manually by the researchers.

Step 1. Organise data for analysis: - At this very initial stage, the researchers transcribe the audio records recorded from interview sessions. Then the researchers did actively read and re-read the transcripts to obtain thorough understanding. This process enabled the meaning and pattern to be captured before the coding process started. At this stage, the researchers took necessary notes by highlighting the phrases or words expressed the informant's main ideas related to a specific research question. Any strong statements that were sounded well founded or profound were noted too.

Step 2. Thorough the data: - After organising, the data were read thoroughly and in details focusing on the research questions and objectives of the study. At this stage, the data were grouped according to the informant answers to the questions by giving equal attention to each data. According to their similarities or groups, the data were initially coding to identify their features.

Step 3. Coding and analysis: - At this stage, after initial coding, the researchers categorised the data in groups on the basis of the subject matter and on the basis of the questions and then went through again and again the transcripts to make sure the data were rightly categorised and no new category was found. And then the data were indexed to be analysed.



Step 4. Themes and description: - At this stage the researchers found out broader concept for each category of data and tried to set them in a theme and tried to describe under some heads. Here the researcher categorised the themes under academic services, non-academic services, other services, students' satisfaction, students' dissatisfaction and students' perception.

Step 5. Interrelating themes: - After identifying the themes and describing them, the researchers sorted out the themes described by and mentioned by the numbers of the informants. Some themes were same categories. So, they were treated as sub-themes under a theme. The themes mentioned repeatedly by several informants, were given more priority to be listed and treated as more important.

Step 6. Interpretation: - At this final stage, the researchers finalised the factors which cause students' satisfaction, which cause students' dissatisfaction and what are their recommendations to improve the service quality of the organisation. They also made the final list of themes along with their sub-themes. To make the lists, the researchers used the quotations of the informants in the appropriate places. This process strengthens the findings of this study.

ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To avoid the name of the interviewees (because, some of them did not like to mention their names), they were labelled as IN1 (Interviewee#1), IN2 (Interviewee#2), IN3 (Interviewee#3), IN4 (Interviewee#4), IN5 (Interviewee#5), IN6 (Interviewee#6), and IN7 (Interviewee#7). All of them are in the age group of 26-42 years and they are attached with IIUM for more than two years. It is also found that among the seven, one has already submitted his PhD thesis and now is waiting for the date of the final viva voce, two did their bachelor degree in IIUM and one studied one year in IIUM during her honours course as an exchange student; and all of those three also did their Master degree from IIUM and now are pursuing their Ph.D. here. So, they have much experience of the service quality of IIUM. Among the respondents, 42.86% (three out of seven) were female where 57.14% (four out of seven) were male and the average time they took in response to the questions and explain their perception was 18 minutes 36 seconds.

For analysis, the services of the university received by the students were categorized into three heads: academic, administrative and others. The reflections of the students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction were easily found from their responses which are discussed in the following sections.

Students' views on service quality in IIUM

Among the seven respondents, 71% (5 out of 7) had a positive view on the service quality of IIUM regardless the academic and non-academic services. 14.5% (1 out of 7) did not express any feeling either positive or negative, rather described the situation; and the rest 14.5% (1 out of 7) said that to some extent the quality of academic service is poor.

Respondents IN2, IN3 and IN4 were satisfied with the services provided by IIUM. Expressing her feelings, IN3 like IN6, mentioned that the infrastructure, the library facilities, medical support is very good though they differed in the online library facilities. IN3 mentioned that all the new books, journals, and other resources are available in print and also in online, but IN6 complaint that the IT facilities regarding online library facility and the data base were not satisfactory and up to date. He said, "And, specific on IT facilities, I am not quite fully satisfied".

On the contrary, IN3 said,

"In some general sense, it is ok. Good in general but, in some cases it is appreciable. You know, the resources for the students, the library, the research materials, books, journals, online materials are very good in academic environment. And in terms of library, I can say all the things take the right places. You can see there the new books,



new journals and other relevant documents. These things ensure that they are extensively positive to ensure the quality inside the students they are producing. After that, they pay for a number of data bases which the students are not allowed to access outside the university. It is very expensive for the students to buy those. So, the university is paying extensively huge amount to serve the students. It is very significant here, which you may not get easily from any other universities”.

She also expressed her good feeling regarding the scholarship facilities in IIUM, and she also mentioned that there is a zakat (one of the pillars of Islam- Financial worship) fund from where the needy people can get support, but, IN6 complaining about the research facilities for the international students, because now it is restricted for them.

IN7 mentioned that the services in IIUM were better compared to her own country but now it is not as much as it was in 2006-2007. She also mentioned some distinctions between the administrative dealings with the regular students and exchange students; between local students and international students; and between the Graduate School of Management (GSM) students and students of the departments. Further, she explained that the tuition fees and services in GSM were more and better than those of the Kulliyyah, but recently, the services at GSM are also reducing.

Beside these, IN1 complaint that under one department, Department of Business Administration, student are doing their Ph.D. in Marketing, Finance, management and so on, but, all of them are getting the same certificate that is PhD in Business Administration, rather focusing their specialization area, which should be not. He also mentioned that to complete the four courses (mandatory for course work and research students), the students have to spend two semesters. In his language, ‘it is too long’.

Like IN1, IN5 also told that the academic service quality is, to some extent, poor. She said, “These academic service qualities are to some extent, poor. It takes much time without any benefit to the students. I took two courses which were taught by the lecturers from deferent departments and they were not well in other fields. It is not fair for the students of different departments. The professors from different departments don’t know how to conduct the research of other departments. For example, the research in management and accounting is much more qualitative than the researchers in economics and finance departments which are basically quantitative. The evaluation is not fair also. My proposal was neglected for one year without any reading. It was not only my problem. I heard this from many of my friends. Here the supervisors take much time and sometimes they are not enough capable to supervise the students, they don’t have much time to spend behind the PhD students. It is not the students’ problem and students cannot solve this problem at all.”

So, here she mentioned the system of the Kulliyyah to offer the courses and the professors who are teaching those courses and mentioned about the capacity and efficiency of the supervisors. And she also claimed that those problems were not only to her, but she heard the same problems from many of her friends.

Areas of Students’ Satisfaction on the Services of IIUM

In terms of their satisfaction, all the seven interviewees were very satisfied with IIUM library. They mentioned that the environment of the library is very good for the students to study there; the resources and online data base are also very good; books, journals and other publications are updated; and the location and infrastructure of the library are very good to the students. Along with this common issue, some highlighted the service quality of IIUM clinic, some told about the lecturers, some told about the teaching attitude of the teachers, some told about the sports complex, mosque and others.

Expressing her emotion, IN3 said,

“Ok, I can describe the situation...one day my daughter was ill, and I was told that she needed an emergency attention. So, therefore, I need to have an ambulance and IIUM clinic had arrange the ambulance immediately and



sent her to the hospital and sent her to the emergency. Though I had to pay but, they were so professional and on time. Other than looking for the taxi,... other than waiting for hours, they just sent her within few minutes. And as soon as she was sent to the emergency, it was possible to take the decision for her treatment. Even, they did all the tasks without asking me to pay the money. So, based on this, they are really concern about the life of human. And, it is a matter of appreciation, I really appreciate it.”

She also mentioned that IIUM clinic serves not only the students of IIUM, but their dependents also. So, she is very satisfied with the medical facilities provided by IIUM clinic.

IN4 expressed his satisfaction feelings in this way,

“Well, I said I am satisfied due to some facilities provided by IIUM. I am quite satisfied with those. For example, library...library...a huge resource, the library...all sorts of facilities, sports complex, mosque, mos Allāh (swt) (small room for prayer), all are very nearer, and students’ need actually. The environment is very friendly with the students, especially for Muslim students”.

Therefore, the respondent is satisfied with the infrastructure and other facilities provided or arranged by the university for the students. IN1, IN3, IN6 and IN7 also expressed their satisfaction on the infrastructure of the university.

Mentioning the administrative services IN6 said,

“Umm....for example of satisfaction, in the case when I came here to get admitted myself in the university, it was quite bit late and I had to face some difficulties to go through all the processes. But I was very satisfied because I was welcome very well by the CPS and then I went to the department and everybody helped me a lot. At that time, it was very difficult for me to find some location, but every staff, then, was very supportive to me and cooperative to me. So, I was very satisfied at that time”.

Like IN6, IN1 and IN2 also mentioned the administrative services of the Kulliyah in a positive way. But, IN7 claimed that the service quality is good now, but was better in 2006-2007, now it is reduced. So, now she is not as satisfied as was before.

In addition, IN2 expressed his satisfaction with the open credit system of course registration and the teaching approach of some of the lecturers. He stated,

“My satisfaction is that there is a flexibility of course registration..... we can take the load as per our credit or result”.

Mentioning some of their names he said,

“There are some lecturers who teach us how to understand and calculate the problems and I like it most. For example, Dr, Salim, then also Prof. Musa Larbani, taught us calculation and emphasize on our understanding level, and I am very very satisfied with them, because, they emphasize on understanding rather memorizing. Another professor, Dr. Sharifa, she is also very good, and she put importance on the calculation and understanding, and I am very very satisfied with her”.

IN4 and IN5 also express their positive opinion regarding the attitude and behaviour of some of the lecturers. As IN5 said,

“My previous supervisors were very good to me and was very helpful also. Still my co-supervisor is very cooperative to me. I got some other lecturers who are very helpful. I am not telling about the co-supervisors. There are some professors, may be from the same department or not, I get some from other departments who are very cooperative and helpful for me. Really, there are some lecturers who are truly willing to uphold their cooperation to the students. So, I am very satisfied with some of the lecturers from other departments along with my co-supervisor”.



Most of the respondents are satisfied with the accommodation facilities in the mahAllāh (swt) s (Students' Halls). As IN2 said,

“In terms of accommodation, I am ok with that, it is also very good for the students in the mah Allāh (swt) s”.
IN4 and IN7 also expressed their experience in the mahAllāh (swt) as satisfactory.”

Furthermore, IN7 is satisfied with the sports facilities in IIUM as those are separated for male and female students. As she stated,

“.....I love ... is the female sports. IIUM has separate sports facilities for male and female. Like, we have the facilities of swimming pool, we have our own basketball fieldalmost completely different for females and the males they have their own. Yea, I love sports”.

She was also satisfied because now IIUM has a gallery.

In connection with the above, IN4 also mentioned that he liked the foods in the canteen, and he was also satisfied with the Muslim friendly environment or Islamic culture at IIUM. And IN1 mentioned that all the faculties are in one place and they are very nearer each other. So, a student or any person who wants, can easily go from one place to another, even within half an hour, which is not found in many universities in Malaysia.

Areas of Students' Dissatisfaction on the Services of IIUM

With the satisfaction of the students on service quality of IIUM, in some cases they also expressed their dissatisfaction.

Firstly, 6 out of 7 respondents are dissatisfied on the internet facilities, especially on the connectivity and speed, in the campus as well as in the mahAllāh (swt) . They claimed that frequently they lost the connection and again, they need to connect, and the speed is very slow. They are facing a lot of problems only because of that. Because, sometimes they have to download some documents and also upload or send some documents through email as assignments, but they cannot. They have to use their personal modem for these purposes. As IN1 said,

“The internet now compares to last three years, it is very bad, very very bad. In other places in the university, especially in the mahAllāh (swt) , basically mahAllāh (swt) Jubair, I live in mahAllāh (swt) Jubair, the internet is not working at any time. We complaint it to the mahAllāh (swt) office, ITD..., but no improvement, they say, inshaaAllāh (swt) (if Allāh swt wants), we will do, we will do, but no improvement. Even, in the last semesters, internet was better than this semester”.

IN2 said,

“.....the IT...sometimes the internet is not good. Even the internet is much worse than last semesters. Speed is very slow”.

IN6 said,

“IT facilities, I am not quite fully satisfied. I am not satisfied with Wi-Fi facilities, and you know, to get access the Wi-Fi, every time we need to log in newly. The Wi-Fi network is not at the same strength in every place, like, you go to the mahAllāh (swt) , every time you enter into the room, and you need to log in again”.

Secondly, the selection of supervisors and their capability to supervise. As IN1 stated his dissatisfied about the selection procedure of PhD supervisors and the examiners, and also about the supervising capability of the supervisors. He mentioned,

“Many supervisors are there who don't have enough knowledge of research methodology and they are supervising the PhD students. Most of the time they don't go through the report properly and that's why students have to suffer a lot from examiners”. He was also very much disappointed because after submitting his thesis report he was waiting for eight months to get the feedback and was waiting to face the final viva voce. He mentioned that his report was on the desk for three months of the PG unit without sending anywhere for evaluation and after sending, the examiner



took another four months to evaluate that. He was questioning about the process, “My thesis report was held in the PG unit without sending anywhere for evaluation. After that four to five months were taken by the examiner to evaluate the report and submit the marks. Now my question is how the system of the university is to choose the examiners and contact the examiners. Four to five months for external examiner, I think it is too much to evaluate”.

Another respondent also mentioned her dissatisfaction regarding her supervisor. IN5 claimed that her present supervisor is not so cooperative, but the co-supervisor is enough to cooperate. She claimed that “My proposal was neglected for one year without any reading. It was not only my problem. I heard this from many of my friends. Here the supervisors take much time and sometimes they are not enough capable to supervise the students, they don’t have much time to spend behind the PhD students”.

She also mentioned that she was not satisfied when she was a student of Paid English unit. She said, “There is a lack of qualitative English teacher in the English language centre”.

Thirdly, most of the respondents mentioned that the maintenance of the accessories is very poor, basically in the mahAllāh (swt) . They claimed that the taps, sinks, lights, etc. in the washrooms in the mahAllāh (swt) don’t workday after day. Even after informing the authority, there is no remedy.

IN7 said,

“I am so disappointed because the services are reducing, especially right now. And, mahAllāh (swt) became blackout the electricity. I mean, no proper maintenance. Then, I see sometimes when I return to the mahAllāh (swt) from my classes at night, the lamp on the road, light off. So, I feel so unsecured walking alone, and it was happened about one week ago and still no maintenance is there”.

IN1 said,

“The maintenance in the university, it is very bad. Because I noticed it more times. The maintenance in the campus and in the mahAllāh (swt) , especially in the mahAllāh (swt) and in the mosAllāh (swt) . The toilet is very bad and in the mosAllāh (swt) the air conditioner does not work. This situation is for more than two months. There is no step to repair those even after complaint for several times. So, this is another reason for dissatisfaction”.

IN2 stated,

“In mahAllāh (swt) , they are very good in painting.....decorating.....changing the furniture.....but, not to maintenance. In the toilet, most of the times the taps, sinks, the lights are not ok, (laughing) the flash boxes don’t work.....and.....the students are suffering, nobody cares about it”.

IN4 mentioned,

“I have been here in mahAllāh (swt) , so the taken care and the maintenance are not so good. The maintenance in the washing rooms, canteens, sometimes the sink and taps are broken, lights are not working, fans are not running, but no maintenance is there, this type of situation is for months after months. Nobody is looking after this”.

Fourthly, the respondents are dissatisfied on the increasing rate in tuition fees and others. Like other respondents, IN1 mentioned about the increasing tuition fees. As he said,

“One more thing is the tuition fees. It is increasing every year. Last year the registration fees were only 80 ringgits but this year it is 370 ringgits. So, the fees have been increased by more than four times means 400% and the tuition fee has been increased by 100%. And for international students, the fees is much higher that the fees for the local students. The service quality is not increasing; I am quite sure about that. And the students are surprised. Whether the tuition fees are increasing, the service quality should be increased, it is the normal expectation. But it is not happening. Ok, they have increased 100% tuition fees, so, the services should be increased at least 30% -50%”.

IN7 stated the same,

“Tuition fees getting higher and higher, but the services are getting lower and lower”.

IN2 expressed his dissatisfaction in such a way,



“Frequently, they are changing the policies and tuition fees. But people don’t know why they are changing. If they explain it to the public, at least the people can know the reasons to make change and they can participate in the changing situation cordially. You know, they are increasing the tuition fees every year. It is a burden for the students as well as guardians, especially the international. Cost is increasing, service is not”.

IN2 also mentioned that he was not satisfied at all on the evaluation policy of the exam paper. He said, “Regarding the policy of academic evaluation in the exam paper. It is, I think, not good to degrade the students on ly to maintain the percentage directed by higher authority. I don’t know whether it is a rule or policy. But there is a practice not to give ‘A’ to more than 5% students in a class. It is not justice. If in a class, all the students deserve ‘A’, the lecturer will be bound to give them ‘A’ grade. Though it is not acceptable, but it is being happened”.

He also claimed that

“The admin in the postgraduate (PG) unit in the Kulliyah, they are not so professional. Many times, they just miss the documents submitted by the students. If you submit your documents and go to them later, to monitor the progress or take information regarding your documents, they may say, “Which documents? When did you submit? Will you submit it again ?” Like these. I had an experience of this type of missing. And it is not for me and one time only, several times with several students”.

He repeated that the authority is not willing to listen and address the problems that the students are facing. “And when I tried to convey the message to the deputy dean of PGunit of the Kulliyah (Faculty), then she told me that it is only you who made this type of complaint. So, the authority is also reluctant about this”.

The student also stated that there is another problem of mixed class. He said,

“There is a mixed class with the students from all the departments of the Kulliyah. Actually, this is not good for the accounting students”.

Respondent IN5 also raised the same issue as one of the reasons of her dissatisfaction.

IN2 also expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of enthusiasm to implement any disciplinary rules in the campus. He mentioned that there is a rule of no smoking, but some students smoking openly in the campus and in the mahAllāh (swt) . Even after complaint against them, there is no action against those smokers.

Another reason for dissatisfaction among the students is transportation. Most of the respondents mentioned that the public transport to and from the campus is not available. Students have to suffer a lot for that. Again, taxi is very expensive and cannot enter into the main gate. So, most of the time students have to wait for buses for hours. In addition, this, IN7 stated that not only the students, but the lower level service holders like cleaners, are also suffering a lot for transportation.

“Another thing regarding the application status and acceptance or rejection the applicants. Sometimes, they, CPS, just reject the application without explaining the reasons behind the rejection to the applicants. If they reject, at least the applicants have the right the reasons why they are rejected. So, they should be informed”, said IN2.

So, the respondent is also dissatisfied with the policy of CPS regarding scrutiny the applicants.

Another important issue is security. Though some of the respondents mentioned that the security is very good in IIUM, but that is only in the library. IN3 stated a new experience and that is,

“Now there is a tendency of becoming worse in some cases and I want to mention here one thing is that the security. The security in the UIA is more restricted in the main gate. Not on the campus. Because, several number of cases in the campus have been occurred. A..a...in this regard the person who is involved, seek attention. Once a day, the person was praying salah in the mosque and their bags were in front of them. Somebody came and took away the bag with laptop and run away. What did the person could do? He may break the *salah* (prayer)and run away behind



the thief. Every time people complain that they took away our bags, took away our shoes, these, these and these. So, the question is about the security in the main gate. Yea, people are not safe here, within the campus. I think, the security is not so effective. They need to put more effort on this”.

One of the respondents told that as an international university, here should have some integration programs which can ensure the integration of multi cultures. As IN4 stated that

“I want to mention here that there is no program to integrate the students. Some programs and events are arranged but those are arranged by the community students totally based on their own culture. But, as an International University, the authority should arrange such programs combining all of the students where multi cultures will be integrated”.

IN6 is not satisfied on the service in terms of research environment and research opportunity, and at the same time on the accommodation facilities for the postgraduate students especially who have family and want to stay together. He also stated that he was very dissatisfied at the beginning of his university life in IIUM when he had to wait for 15-17 days to get the seat in the mahAllāh (swt) . He claimed that seats were available, but he had to wait for that. As he said,

“I had to wait for hostel at least 15 to 17 days, rooms were available but at first, when you come, you have to apply, and you have to wait at least 15-20 days. It also happened with some other students. The accommodation is the issue here, though accommodation is available here, but you have to wait. So, on this service, I am not satisfied. I am married and I have kids. So, as an international university, the authority should provide the facilities like family quarters”.

Differ with IN4, IN7 said that environment in the campus is not truly Islamic. She claimed that

“Actually, sisters and brothers are mixture, its ok if it is a group discussion, but that is not a group discussion. Since morning till night, up to close time, this is not only once, I saw some several times. The people who do the same thing, I know some of their faces. I don't think that this is a group work. The group can be in three people to discuss for two to three hours regarding the subjects. One thing is that I am not satisfied with the students who are sitting beside, talking-talking, laughing-laughing and they do the same thing days after days. This is an Islamic University of course and about the dress code also. I don't know the services whether their rules need to be implemented more strictly, because, people from outside think that this is an Islamic University!”

Recommendations for Improving the Service Quality of IIUM

The respondent students provided some important recommendations for IIUM to improve its service quality. For example, IN1 said that the university should focus on academic service, it should be specified that how much time a student may take to complete each task in his/her PhD journey; at least Associate Professors should be assigned to teach the PhD students; in a semester, at least one meeting should be held in between the top level administrators and the students of each kulliyah; and the supervisors should be assigned on the basis of their supervising ability and the knowledge of using methodology. And the last one is recommended by most of the respondents.

IN2 mentioned that all of the causes of dissatisfaction, should be addressed properly and also recommend that,

“Document missing is not a simple matter, sometimes it is a matter of life. So, they should have to provide an acknowledgement slip for receiving the documents including...what they are receiving,...when they are receiving,...and....who is receiving...and with a seal and signature with date...all should be there. If it is provided, then the incumbent student will be able to inquire and if needed they can claim properly”.

He also recommended that the taxi should be allowed in the main entrance, public transportation should be made available for all in the campus which is also recommended by IN3, IN4, IN5, IN6 and IN7; and international students should be appointed as research assistant which is also recommended by IN6 and IN7. He further recommended that the students who will be eligible for scholarship, they need not to



apply for scholarship, they should be given scholarship automatically and for master level students the condition of having a journal article should be reluctant.

To prevent the hijack and safe the life of human in the campus, IN3 recommended that the cc camera should be activated, posturing and banner with the photograph of the thief should take place in the public place during the Jumuah prayer (Friday prayer for the Muslim), so that people can be aware of those people, and also the security force should be more effective.

IN4 said,

“There should have some integration programs. There should be some quota as it is an International university. May be the quota is 50% for local and 50% for the international students in any program. I think, it will help to ensure the integration of all the students. The other thing is that the rules in IIUM, the rules are very good in IIUM, but the implementation is not good. So, the authority should be very conscious about the implementation of those rules”.

The last one is also recommended by IN7.

IN5 mentioned that some surveys and studies should be conducted to find out the students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, or to identify the problems the students are facing; and on the basis of the study results, the authority should take some measures to improve the quality by eliminating the problems the students are facing. She also recommends for conducting at least one meeting in a semester in between the Head of the department and the students of the department. There they need to address all sorts of problems the students are facing and discuss about the solutions of those problems. And she thought that this type of program would be helpful for the students as well as the administration.

IN6 recommended that IIUM should take students' feedback about what they actually want. According to their want, IIUM should take steps; university should impose pressure on Govt. so that the Govt. gives equal opportunity for the international students in research projects.

IN7 mentioned that the university should prioritize their needs and then accordingly they should meet the demand because IIUM has some fund crisis; and also, Centre for Postgraduate Studies (CPS) should be careful about the selection of the talented students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above discussion, it is clear that the students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction is totally related with the academic, administrative, supplement and IT services (Jesus et al. 2013). All of the points raised by the respondent students, can be categorized into four, academic- lecturer, teaching method, evaluation criteria, and library facility; administrative- clerical services from all the relevant offices; IT- internet access, Wi-Fi connectivity, online library access; and others- infrastructure, logistics, medical facilities, scholarship and financial supports, accommodation facilities, transportation facilities, and so on. It is also found that most of the students are satisfied with the library facilities, some are satisfied with some of the lecturers and their teaching methods, some are satisfied with their supervisors; they are also satisfied with the infrastructure and logistics. In the case of dissatisfaction, most of the students are dissatisfied with the IT services and also on scholarship and research project services; they are also dissatisfied on the increasing rate of tuition fees. They are also dissatisfied with the reducing service quality. So, considering as customers, to satisfy the students, IIUM should properly address the problems rose by the respondent students, and should uphold the services where the students are satisfied with. And the recommendations provided by the students, should also be considered positively giving them some weights.



The study result may not be generalized, because, it is unique in looking at the service quality of one Kulliyah of one university in Malaysia, which would naturally be different from other universities. However, the findings could serve as a good reference for the further research in the same arena.

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