

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AS A STRATEGIC INDICATOR OF QUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Customer satisfaction is one of the key factors in improving the quality of educational institutions. Educational institutions are expected to meet the needs of their customers. When these needs are fulfilled, institutions will be able to develop and enhance their quality, allowing them to remain competitive. Customer satisfaction is closely related to the quality of educational institutions. If customer satisfaction is not achieved, meaning the institution fails to meet the needs of its customers, then the institution cannot be considered to have high quality. On the other hand, if an institution is able to fulfill customer needs, it can be regarded as a quality institution.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Customer, Education.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world is rapidly evolving, and nearly all sectors of life are experiencing significant changes. The field of education is no exception to this transformation. As a result, competition within the education sector has become unavoidable. Many acknowledge that the development of an institution depends on how well its services align with the needs of its customers. The Indonesian government has made various efforts to improve the quality of education. Quality in education has become a key issue in shaping the future workforce, particularly in Islamic education. Quality remains a dominant aspect in the education sector and is closely tied to the overall performance of Islamic educational institutions.

At present, Islamic educational institutions are striving to achieve a reputation for high quality, aiming to become benchmarks in delivering educational services. Measuring quality is no longer focused solely on students but encompasses all aspects of the institution. The successful implementation of quality Islamic education depends heavily on the accuracy in identifying, formulating, designing, and executing educational policies, strategies, and operational programs. This implies that school leaders must possess strong managerial skills, and educational staff must perform their professional roles effectively.

Schools, as the front-line units directly engaging with actual educational needs, must begin to exercise autonomy in managing their institutions. Under the leadership of professional principals, schools are expected to grow and deliver optimal services based on their potential, which will ultimately improve the quality of education in their institutions. As a result, public trust in formal Islamic education institutions will increase significantly. The progress of an educational institution largely depends on the ability of its administrators to maintain quality so that public trust, as education consumers, remains strong. This condition will be realized when society, as the customer of Islamic educational institutions, feels satisfied with the services offered by these institutions. Customer satisfaction in education is essential for building strong and competitive institutions in an increasingly globalized environment.

Educational organizations must establish management systems that enhance the attributes considered important by the market, so that the concept of educational marketing evolves from a service-product perspective to a market-oriented and even community-

oriented perspective. To build such institutions, effective management is necessary to enhance the quality of educational services. This begins with analyzing the desires and needs of the community and responding with well-planned marketing strategies, from the most basic aspects to the most critical elements, followed by implementing marketing activities with clear objectives and monitoring their execution. Additionally, educational institutions must possess high levels of appeal and competitiveness to meet public expectations as consumers of educational services. When institutions fail to deliver services in line with public expectations, it results in a negative public image. To meet those expectations, there must be effective educational marketing management. In education, customer satisfaction, whether from students, parents, government, or others, reflects the institution's quality and effectiveness. Customer satisfaction refers to the feeling of happiness or contentment experienced after receiving educational services or products and reflects the extent to which their expectations have been fulfilled.

One way to face the increasing competition in education during this era of globalization is by enhancing customer satisfaction through the services offered to them (Tjiptono, 2004). Achieving a high level of satisfaction requires a strong commitment from everyone within the institution to meet the needs and desires of the customers. The purpose of this article is to analyze customer satisfaction and its connection to quality management. This article offers valuable insights for educational practitioners aiming to enhance the quality of education. The analysis and discussion presented are expected to benefit all educational practitioners in their efforts to improve educational quality.

DISCUSSION

The Concept of Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment that arises when someone compares the perceived performance of a product or service to the expected performance (Ekowati, 2008). Consumer satisfaction is a conscious evaluation or cognitive judgment regarding whether a product performs well or poorly and whether it fits its intended purpose or usage (Tjiptono, 2004). Satisfaction occurs when customer needs, desires, and expectations are met, resulting in repeat purchases and continued loyalty. A satisfied consumer is likely to purchase other products offered by the institution and can act as an effective marketer through positive word-of-mouth.

Consumer satisfaction refers to the degree of feeling a customer experiences after comparing what they receive with what they expected (Umar, 2005:65). A customer who feels satisfied with the value of a product or service is more likely to remain loyal over time. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, as cited in Marketing Management, consumer satisfaction is the pleasure or disappointment experienced after comparing actual performance with what was expected (2007:177). According to Pramesti and Waluyo (2020), in their book *The Influence of Brand Image and Customer Value on Repurchase Intention Through Customer Satisfaction*, consumer satisfaction represents a personal degree of feeling after evaluating the outcome or performance of a product against expectations. Susan Fournier and David Glen Mick describe customer satisfaction as a dynamic process that can change over time and is closely linked to strong social dimensions. The concept involves both emotional and meaningful components. The satisfaction process connects various paradigms and models but always relates to the overall experience and quality of life. In essence, customer satisfaction is the response felt when needs are fulfilled, resulting in comfort or pleasure. This means that the appreciation of the uniqueness or excellence of a product or service contributes to the comfort level and reflects the fulfillment of expectations, whether met or exceeded.

Customers in educational institutions can be classified as both external and internal. The main external customer in schools is the student, who is also the primary input to be shaped into a graduate. Other external customers include parents, businesses, government bodies, and institutions of higher education. To achieve high satisfaction among external customers, school principals must first satisfy their internal customers, which include teachers, librarians, laboratory assistants, administrative staff, security personnel, and custodial staff. These internal personnel are essential for building and sustaining a quality institution.

Internal customer satisfaction in schools depends on adequate facilities, infrastructure, and fair compensation for their work, whether financial, material, or non-material, including overall well-being. Evidence of internal customer satisfaction is reflected in their ability to carry out their roles effectively according to established systems, procedures, and guidelines. When internal satisfaction is achieved, it is more likely that the institution will satisfy its external customers. Based on these definitions, customer satisfaction can be summarized as the emotional response that arises after using a product or service. Satisfaction occurs when outcomes exceed expectations. Conversely, if outcomes fall short, dissatisfaction arises. This means that customer satisfaction is a critical factor in retaining clients. Without customers, organizations struggle to survive in a competitive environment (Izzulka & Laksono, 2022).

According to Midie in Samsirin (2015), satisfaction toward educational institutions can be seen in customers' willingness to contribute ideas or donations without coercion. Unmet expectations may stem from several factors, such as customers miscommunicating their needs, misinterpreting signals like pricing or brand positioning, miscommunication from word-of-mouth, poor employee performance, or misleading information from competitors. Creating customer satisfaction offers key benefits such as strengthening relationships between institutions and customers, encouraging repeat purchases and loyalty, and generating positive word-of-mouth. This leads consumers to engage in repeated purchases and develop loyalty toward the educational institution. Service quality criteria must be measured through the lens of customer satisfaction. With increasing competition among service providers, the focus must shift toward improving service quality. In reality, service quality centers on consumer satisfaction because services are intangible and cannot be stored. Therefore, services are defined by the experiences offered to customers, directly impacting their satisfaction and likelihood to repurchase (Ma'rufah, 2023).

Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction

School customers will feel satisfied with the services provided by school principals when their expectations or needs are met. Several key factors influence customer satisfaction in education, including service quality, facilities, and feedback and communication. These factors significantly affect customer perceptions regarding the quality of education and the services delivered by educational institutions. These factors can be described as follows:

1. Service Quality can be measured based on the performance of administrative staff in academic services, financial services, student affairs, and cleanliness. In this regard, service quality must comply with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). If services deviate from these standards, customer satisfaction levels may be negatively impacted.
2. Facilities can be evaluated through various aspects, such as the quality of school buildings and classrooms, whether they meet established standards. Classroom quality includes factors like the number of chairs, whiteboards, projectors, Wi-Fi availability, lighting, and comfort. The library is also considered, including the sufficiency of books and research references, availability of tables and chairs, and overall comfort. In addition, canteen facilities are assessed based on the availability and quality of food, and public facilities are judged by the adequacy and cleanliness of prayer rooms, toilets, and water access.

3. Feedback and Communication can be observed through effective interaction between students, parents, and educational staff. Constructive feedback plays a vital role in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Beyond these primary factors, Rangkutty (2002:30) identifies seven other elements that influence customer satisfaction: a) Value, b) Competitiveness, c) Customer perception, d) Price, e) Image, f) Service stage, g) Service moment, and h) Customer priority level. These elements, when applied in an educational context, relate to customer satisfaction as follows:

1. Value refers to the benefit or outcome derived from a product or service based on the customer's perception. If the service offered by the school meets the customer's expectations, it will be perceived as valuable. However, not all services provided by a school are always perceived as valuable by all customers.
2. Competitiveness indicates the school's ability to offer services that compete effectively with other institutions. If the services lack competitive value, customers may feel dissatisfied and may seek alternatives.
3. Customer Perception is influenced by how customers receive and interpret the services offered. If the service is perceived as positive, customers are more likely to feel satisfied and consider the service worth their investment.
4. Price becomes a factor when customers feel that the cost of education is proportional to the quality of services received. High costs coupled with poor service often result in dissatisfaction.
5. Image significantly influences customer satisfaction. A negative image can undermine the perceived quality of services, while a positive image helps customers more readily accept and appreciate school services.
6. Service Stage refers to the process by which satisfaction is experienced. Customers may not feel satisfied instantly but may become more satisfied as they experience service at various stages over time.
7. Service Moment involves customer experiences during each point of service delivery, including how the service is presented, the process of delivery, and the supporting environment.
8. Customer Priority Level suggests that customers with a higher stake in the school's services are more likely to feel satisfied if those services meet their critical expectations.

When customers feel satisfied with the services they receive, they are more likely to develop loyalty toward the educational institution. This loyalty may manifest in continued enrollment, recommendations to others, or support for the institution's various activities.

Quality Management in Education

According to Mary Parker Follett, management is the art of getting things done through other people. Meanwhile, Ramayulis defines management essentially as *al-tadbir* (organization), derived from the word *dabbara*, which means "to organize." Terminologically, management is the process of coordinating work activities to be completed efficiently and effectively with and through others. Furthermore, management is described as the ability or skill to achieve results in order to accomplish goals through the activities of others. Therefore, management is a process of organizing, managing, and utilizing all available human and natural resources with the assistance and collaboration of others, so that common goals can be achieved effectively, efficiently, and productively. This process is grounded in the POAC framework, which includes Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling.

Quality is defined as the best possible state with no equal, or the ability to meet customer needs, commonly referred to as relative quality. It also implies that (1) high-quality attributes are consistent or long-lasting, (2) not everyone can possess them, and (3) they are exclusive. Relative quality is constantly changing according to customer preferences, and

product attributes shift based on public demand. Quality also means the effort to meet or exceed customer expectations, where quality is a condition that evolves. What is considered high quality today may be seen as inadequate in the future. Quality management in education or Total Quality Management (TQM) is a strategy for operating an institution that aims to maximize its competitiveness through continuous improvement in its products, services, human resources, processes, and environment.

In the context of educational quality, it refers to the entire system of inputs, processes, and outputs. Another definition states that educational management involves the process of organizing cooperative work efforts by groups of people within educational institutions to achieve predetermined goals efficiently and effectively. Thus, Islamic educational quality management is the process of managing Islamic educational institutions by mobilizing human resources to achieve the goals of Islamic education efficiently and effectively. To improve the quality of education, it is crucial for school principals to possess managerial competence so they can plan, organize, mobilize, and control all activities that have been planned and implemented in schools or madrasahs, thereby achieving the stated goals. According to Hensler and Brunell (as cited in Husaini Usman), there are four main principles of quality management in education:

1. Customer Orientation Principle

Quality is not merely about meeting specific standards but is defined by the customers.

2. Respect for Everyone

In world-class schools, everyone is considered to have potential.

3. Management Based on Facts

World-class schools rely on data and evidence for decision-making rather than emotions or memory.

4. Continuous Improvement

To succeed, every school must carry out systematic and ongoing improvement processes.

According to Aan Komariah, the application of quality principles in education includes the following:

1. Specific application of customer orientation.
2. Specific application of leadership.
3. Specific application of people involvement.
4. Specific application of process approach.
5. Specific application of system approach in management.
6. Specific application of continuous improvement.
7. Specific application of factual decision-making.
8. Specific application of mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

From these principles, it can be concluded that in efforts to improve quality, all elements within an organization must be involved and share the same tasks, vision, and mission.

Thinkers on Quality

Dr. W. Edwards Deming (October 14, 1900 – December 20, 1993) was an American statistician, educator, and consultant widely known as the “Father of Quality Control.” According to W. Edwards Deming, the issue of quality lies within management, meaning that in the context of educational institutions, quality must be assessed through aspects related to management. According to Usman (2011:503), Deming proposed 14 famous points that offer a new approach to quality management and call on leaders to shift their managerial practices. These 14 principles are:

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and job opportunities.
2. Adopt a new philosophy.
3. Cease dependence on mass inspection to achieve quality.
4. End the practice of awarding business based on price tag alone.
5. Continuously improve the system of production and service to enhance quality and productivity.
6. Institute training on the job.
7. Institute leadership.
8. Drive out fear so everyone may work effectively.
9. Break down barriers between departments.
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce that ask for zero defects and new levels of productivity.
11. Eliminate numerical quotas for work.
12. Remove barriers that rob employees of pride in their workmanship.
13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone.
14. Put everyone in the company to work to accomplish the transformation.

These 14 points by W. Edwards Deming can be analyzed in relation to customer satisfaction, particularly referring to the students and communities involved in the field of education.

The Relationship Between Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction

Quality management has become a key strategy in building customer satisfaction across various sectors, including education. Customers feel satisfied when the services they receive meet or even exceed their expectations. Educational institutions that consistently implement quality systems gain greater trust from the public. This trust directly influences customer loyalty to the institution. Such loyalty strengthens the institution's position amid increasing competition. At the same time, the institution's reputation improves as customer satisfaction increases (Khan et al., 2022).

Service quality must be a top priority for educational institutions in their daily operations. High-quality services provide positive experiences for customers at every point of interaction. These positive experiences reinforce a good perception of the institution as a responsible service provider. This positive impression is a crucial asset for ensuring the institution's long-term sustainability. Institutions that successfully maintain quality tend to have loyal and returning customers. This has been proven in studies of restaurant service consumers, where product and service quality had a significant impact on customer loyalty (Naini et al., 2022).

In the educational context, customers are not limited to students but also include parents, the community, and the government. Each of these customer groups has different expectations regarding educational quality. Quality services can bridge these differences and build unified trust in the institution. Customers who feel valued are more likely to demonstrate tangible loyalty to the institution. Customer loyalty is essential for the continuity and development of educational institutions. Research by Supriyanto et al. (2021) shows that service quality indirectly enhances loyalty through perceived satisfaction.

Quality management involves not only administrative but also operational and behavioral aspects of service interaction. Every employee in an educational institution plays a role in delivering service quality experienced by the customer. Service quality is assessed not only from academic results but also from comfort, communication, and the involvement of customers in the educational process. When all aspects of service are executed with responsibility, the outcome is sustainable satisfaction. This satisfaction becomes added value that strengthens the institution's position in society. Empirical evidence shows that service quality has a direct effect on customer satisfaction in online service contexts, as found by Ali

et al. (2021).

Customer satisfaction stems from a series of consistently positive experiences with the institution. It is not enough to deliver good service once and expect lifelong satisfaction. Customers need ongoing service that keeps pace with their evolving expectations and needs. Institutions that fail to maintain consistent quality will lose customer trust. This decline directly impacts customer loyalty and continued participation. Customer satisfaction is dynamic and must be maintained through a systematic and comprehensive approach (Khairawati, 2020).

Internal factors within the educational institution, such as employee satisfaction, also play a significant role in customer-perceived service quality. Employees who feel appreciated and well-treated are more likely to deliver better services. High job satisfaction boosts morale and encourages excellent service delivery to students and parents. Respectful and responsible interactions leave lasting impressions on customers, fostering long-term loyalty that benefits the institution. A study by Al Kurdi et al. (2020) found a causal relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction.

SMPN 40 Surabaya is an example of a school that seriously and consistently applies quality management. The school integrates quality improvement programs with regular customer satisfaction evaluations. These programs include teacher training, the promotion of school culture, and upgrades to learning facilities. Student reflections and feedback from class meetings serve as simple tools to assess customer satisfaction. The evaluations provide feedback for improving quality and aligning services with customer expectations. Research by Rahayu et al. (2023) shows positive outcomes from quality management efforts in enhancing student satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is inseparable from the reputation of the institution, which is built continuously through quality services. Reputation is an intangible asset that heavily influences customer decisions when choosing an educational institution. Institutions with a good reputation tend to be more trusted and recommended by the public. These recommendations expand the institution's customer network and strengthen its presence. Consistently high service quality leads to deep-rooted satisfaction and a strong, positive reputation. Khan et al. (2022) emphasize that corporate reputation has a significant effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Educational institutions must plan carefully and systematically in managing the quality of services offered. This planning involves analyzing customer needs, designing service programs, and evaluating outcomes regularly. All components of the institution must work together to implement these plans consistently. Services provided must address customers' actual needs in the field. Alignment between services and expectations fosters sustainable satisfaction. Research by Naini et al. (2022) proves that accurate responses and employee attentiveness are key determinants of customer satisfaction.

Quality does not only mean excellence in service but also the effectiveness in handling complaints and customer needs. Customers who experience issues or disappointments should receive prompt and effective responses. Appropriate responses restore trust in the institution, whereas delays or unclear resolutions damage the perception of quality. Negative perceptions erode customer loyalty and harm the institution's image. Quality must include timeliness and accuracy in all service processes (Supriyanto et al., 2021).

Successful quality management requires active and ongoing participation from all members of the institution. Each individual plays an essential role in creating a positive customer experience. A work culture that supports collaboration and innovation will strengthen service quality. This collaboration builds a resilient system that responds to the ever-changing needs of customers. Institutions must continuously update and adapt to changes. Adaptation is part of the strategy to maintain long-term customer satisfaction (Ali

et al., 2021).

Quality evaluations should be conducted regularly using objective and measurable indicators. These indicators may include customer feedback, student learning outcomes, and observations of service delivery. Data from evaluations form the foundation for developing service improvement strategies. These strategies must be consistently implemented and involve all institutional elements. Data-driven quality improvement yields tangible and accountable results. Regular evaluations are fundamental to maintaining and enhancing customer satisfaction (Khairawati, 2020).

Customer loyalty programs can also be integrated into quality management strategies in education. Such programs may involve rewards for outstanding students or special services for actively involved parents. These gestures create emotionally positive experiences for customers. Customers who feel appreciated are more emotionally attached to the institution. This attachment fosters long-term relationships and enhances the institution's image. A study by Khairawati (2020) found that loyalty programs significantly impact both customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Educational institutions aiming to maintain quality excellence must develop long-term strategies for nurturing customer satisfaction. These strategies should be based on valid data and supported by competent human resources. Training and professional development are key to improving service quality. Investing in human resources directly impacts how customers perceive the institution. Customers evaluate institutions based on how employees serve and interact with them. Al Kurdi et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of employee satisfaction in achieving overall customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is the final result of an effective and consistent quality management process. Educational institutions that build a quality service ecosystem will gain trust and loyalty from the community. This loyalty becomes a crucial foundation for institutional stability and sustainable growth. Satisfaction is not achieved instantly but through hard work and long-term commitment. A commitment to quality must be embedded in every aspect of educational service delivery. Quality management and customer satisfaction must go hand in hand as two sides of the same goal (Khan et al., 2022).

Case Study of Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction in Education

The implementation of quality management in educational institutions has shown a tangible impact on customer satisfaction, particularly among students. A study at SMPN 40 Surabaya demonstrated increased student satisfaction following the consistent application of a quality culture. Improvements included the provision of facilities such as LCD projectors and sound systems, as well as regular training for educators. The school also conducts evaluations twice a year to assess service quality. Student reflection is the primary method used to gauge satisfaction with the educational services provided. This study highlights that direct involvement of customers is a key factor in strengthening service quality (Rahayu et al., 2023).

Similar findings were reported in a study by Husain et al. (2022), which examined student satisfaction with educational services in West Kalimantan. Evaluations were based on various aspects including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Student satisfaction levels ranged between 76 and 78 percent across these dimensions. These results emphasize the importance of quality management in shaping students' perceptions of the education they receive. Institutional commitment to service quality significantly contributes to academic success and student loyalty. Consistent evaluation practices lead to real improvements in daily educational activities.

Surahman (2020) found that during the pandemic, student satisfaction with online learning was heavily influenced by the quality of teacher services. About 41 percent of students reported being satisfied, while approximately 30 percent expressed dissatisfaction.

Factors contributing to dissatisfaction included limited internet access and a lack of guidance from lecturers. This indicates that quality management in online services requires both technical and emotional approaches. Responsive and personalized services can enhance student satisfaction in distance learning systems. Attention to these aspects is critical for the success of remote learning programs during crises.

Research by Cahyono et al. (2020) revealed that service quality and university image have a significant impact on student satisfaction and loyalty. This study involved 100 respondents from private universities in Indonesia. Key variables such as tangibles, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance were identified as critical in shaping satisfaction. The analysis used SEM SmartPLS and demonstrated both direct and indirect effects of these variables. Student satisfaction plays a major role in fostering long-term loyalty to institutions. These findings suggest that customer-based quality management is highly relevant in the higher education sector.

These studies affirm that customer orientation should be embedded from the planning stages of educational programs through to regular evaluations. Customer satisfaction should not be assessed solely through academic outcomes, but also through the overall learning experience. Factors such as the learning environment, communication with lecturers, and the availability of supporting facilities are key components. Continuous service quality improvements will result in graduates who are not only competent but also satisfied with their learning journey. The success of educational institutions largely depends on the active involvement of customers in every phase of service development. This is foundational in building a strong and sustainable quality culture.

The emphasis on service quality and customer satisfaction is also reflected in studies on online education services. When learning is conducted virtually, new challenges arise in interactions between students and teachers. Technology alone cannot replace personal interactions without a well-planned service strategy. Active teacher involvement in providing feedback and support becomes a key indicator of customer satisfaction. Accessibility, prompt response, and empathy are essential elements of effective online services. These factors serve as indicators of quality in digital learning environments.

SMPN 40 Surabaya also fosters a customer-oriented work culture through various daily activities. The 5S program forms the foundation for developing student discipline and responsibility. Morning national anthem rituals and literacy sessions help cultivate a positive school identity. These activities create a conducive learning atmosphere that enhances student comfort. Increased student satisfaction is evident in high participation and enthusiasm in school events. A customer-focused culture fosters an environment that supports overall service quality (Rahayu et al., 2023).

Customer satisfaction in education is closely tied to the quality of services provided by both teaching and non-teaching staff. The availability of facilities is important in supporting learning activities, but without committed human resources, service quality cannot be maximized. Teacher training and human resource development are crucial components of an effective quality system. Regular evaluations of educator performance demonstrate a tangible commitment to customers. Collaboration among all school components is essential in maintaining established quality standards.

Quality improvement cannot be achieved without a structured and consistent evaluation system. Evaluations should involve all stakeholders, including students and parents. Tools such as satisfaction surveys and student reflections provide objective and relevant measurements. Evaluation results serve as the basis for school program improvements and development. This shows that quality management is dynamic and responsive to customer needs. Such processes allow educational institutions to continuously adapt to changing societal demands and expectations.

One form of quality management implementation is through accreditation and internal quality assurance. Accreditation processes push institutions to meet national standards. External assessments motivate institutions to enhance their educational services. Moreover, accreditation boosts public trust in educational institutions. It provides a strong foundation for shaping a professional and competent institutional image. Consistent application of quality systems fosters innovation in academic services.

Student satisfaction has also been shown to influence long-term loyalty. Research by Cahyono et al. (2020) indicates that higher levels of satisfaction increase the likelihood of students remaining loyal to their institution. This loyalty is reflected in positive recommendations and active participation in alumni activities. This proves that quality education services extend beyond graduation. Their impact is sustained through long-term relationships between alumni and institutions. Such loyalty is a valuable asset for the growth of educational institutions.

A survey by Husain et al. (2022) found that empathy and responsiveness had the greatest influence on student perceptions. Students feel more valued when they receive prompt services tailored to their needs. Institutional responsiveness is a critical factor in building customer trust. Students who feel acknowledged are more likely to develop strong attachments to their institutions. This indicates that personalized services are more effective in increasing customer satisfaction. These service dimensions must be continuously strengthened in educational quality management strategies.

Service quality in educational institutions encompasses not only academic aspects but also administrative and psychological support. Accurate academic services, such as grade processing or scheduling, are highly valued by students. In addition, access to counseling and personal development services significantly impacts satisfaction. Students require support not just in academic learning but also in broader campus life. A holistic service approach provides a more meaningful learning experience, reinforcing sustained student-institution relationships.

Involving customers in program planning is an effective strategy to ensure services meet expectations. Activities like student discussion forums or suggestion boxes can bridge customer aspirations. Institutions that are open to criticism and suggestions demonstrate a commitment to quality improvement. This process also enhances the sense of ownership among students toward their schools or campuses. They feel that their voices matter and are heard by the institution. Such engagement fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Surahman's (2020) research showed that the biggest challenges in online education stem from technological access and the role of instructors. Students expressed that the active presence of lecturers in the learning process greatly influenced their satisfaction. Weak communication was a key trigger for dissatisfaction in online learning. Strengthening the role of lecturers in digital services is a crucial agenda in quality strategy. Technology-based services must be complemented by a personal approach from educators. The combination of technology and human interaction is the key to satisfying online education experiences.

Educational institutions seeking to maintain a competitive advantage must place customers at the center of attention. Customer satisfaction should not be treated as an end goal but as an ongoing process that must be sustained. Quality management must become a work culture involving every element of the institution. Every policy and program should be designed based on the real needs of customers. A commitment to quality and satisfaction is the foundation for educational success in the modern era. This is the cornerstone for creating educational institutions that are excellent and trusted by the public.

CONCLUSION

Services in Islamic education encompass various aspects such as learning services, personnel services, financial services, and welfare services. The task of Islamic educational institutions is to provide optimal service to their customers. Customer satisfaction in Islamic educational institutions refers to the condition in which customers' needs are fulfilled, meaning all required services are delivered according to the desired standards. The more extensively these needs are met, the higher the level of satisfaction attained.

Customer satisfaction is one of the key factors in improving the quality of educational institutions. These institutions are expected to be capable of meeting the needs of their customers. Therefore, educational institutions can grow and enhance their quality, ultimately enabling them to survive amid competitive environments. Customer satisfaction is closely linked to the quality of educational institutions. If customer satisfaction is not achieved, meaning the institution fails to meet the needs of its customers, then the institution cannot be considered to have high quality. Conversely, if an institution successfully meets the needs of its customers, it can be deemed to be of good quality.

Recommendations

Educational institutions are advised to:

1. Conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys.
2. Implement staff training programs to enhance service quality.
3. Establish an effective feedback system to listen to customer aspirations.

Through these steps, institutions can ensure they are meeting the needs and expectations of their customers while also improving the overall quality of education.

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