

## **FACULTY OF EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' SATISFACTION TOWARDS THEIR FACULTY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Students' satisfaction is regarded as a vital aspect in determining a higher education institution's success, reputation and relevance. This study investigates level of postgraduate students' satisfaction towards a Faculty of Education at a public university in Malaysia. Quantitative research design was employed by researchers for this study. The instrument used was questionnaire. It was found that the sample has high overall satisfaction level and also scored high satisfaction level in all six dimensions that were measured such as students' satisfaction with academic staffs, students' satisfaction with program, students' satisfaction with education facilities, students' satisfaction with non-academic staffs, students' satisfaction with campus, and students' satisfaction with general services. However, there were no significant differences between satisfaction level and demographic profile such as gender and program. As for the implications of this study, it contributes to the corpus of knowledge in the area of postgraduate students' satisfaction in local context and provides empirical data to assist higher education institutions in fulfilling their students' expectations.

**Keywords:** *Postgraduate students, Students' satisfaction, Higher Education Institution.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Customer orientation and evaluation of customer satisfaction are typical concerns of organisations as they have to care about customers in order not to be excluded from the competitive arena (Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, & Romanazzi, 2006). According to Tan, Wong, Lam, Ooi and Ng (2010), customers always have the

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feeling of being wanted and appreciated without needing to make such a request, therefore, their satisfaction is essential to the survival of organisations. Yet, customer satisfaction is an ambiguous concept as satisfaction differs from one consumer to another and from product to another (Munteanu, Ceobanu Bobolca & Anton, 2010). When it comes to higher education sector, students are considered as the consumers and students' satisfaction is viewed as a crucial point for a higher education institution's success and survival (Vatta & Bhatara, 2013; Letcher & Naves, 2010). Arambewela & Hall (2009) stated that if the institution can satisfy their students; the satisfaction will bring the student retention; new students will also be attracted and positive word about the institution will be spread as well. With the increasing number of public and private higher educational institutions of universities and colleges in our country nowadays, input on students' satisfaction certainly gives an education institution competitive advantage over other institutions. This is due to the fact that most students usually will evaluate and compare various aspects related to a higher education institution with another higher education institution before making final decision on the right institution for them to pursue their study. Hence, this research intends to identify postgraduate students' satisfaction towards a Faculty of Education in one of Malaysian public universities.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the level of postgraduate students' satisfaction towards their faculty?
2. Is there any significant difference between postgraduate students' satisfaction based on demographic profile?

## **DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS**

- Satisfaction

A state felt by a person who has experienced a performance or an outcome that fulfil his or her expectation (Kotler & Clarke, 1987)

- Students' satisfaction

The favourability of students' subjective assessment of the numerous outcomes and experiences related with education and being shaped continually and repeated experiences in campus life. (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1989).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Students' Satisfaction Integrated Concept pertaining to Service Quality**

Students' satisfaction plays an important role in determining efficiency of an education institution. Hasan, Ilias, Rahman and Yaso (2008) assumed that satisfaction

actually includes issues of perception and experiences of students during their study years. The results of previous researches revealed that satisfied students will attract new students to study in the education institution by engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication about the institution with their friends and acquaintances. Subsequently, interested people will enroll to the education institution to further continue their study or to take other courses (Gruber, Fub, Voss, & Glaser-Zikuda, 2010; Helgesen & Nasset, 2007). Next, the quality of any of the service experienced by customers forms part of their overall impression of the organisation and eventually, it influences their satisfaction towards the organisation (Oldfield & Baron, 2000; Ragavan & Ganesh, 2015). This is because most people's satisfaction is derived from the people that they see, and they are either dissatisfied or delighted, or some other point on the continuum in between (Galiffa & Batelle, 2010). Students are likely to be satisfied in their educational institution when the service provided fulfils their expectations and they will be very satisfied when the service provided is beyond their expectations. On the contrary, students are dissatisfied with the educational institution when the service provided is lesser than their expectations, and when there is a big gap between perceived and expected service quality (Petruzzellis, De'Ugento, & Romanazzi, 2006).

### **Previous Studies on Students' Satisfaction**

Abbasi, Malik, Chaudhry, & Imdadullah (2011) found that students are dissatisfied with many core services and facilities like teaching, administrative support, library, labs, accommodation, medical facilities, and sports facilities, while they are satisfied only in three augmented areas like transportation, classroom and prayer facilities

Another study by Hasan et al. (2008) identified that the main factors that could affect the level of students' satisfaction were: students' perception on learning and teaching, support facilities for teaching and learning such as (libraries, computer and lab facilities), learning environment (rooms of lectures, laboratories, social space and university buildings), support facilities (health facilities, refectories, student accommodation, student services) and external aspects of being a student (such as finance, transportation). By fulfilling these aspects, an education institution will be able to meet students' satisfaction and remain competitive in higher education sector. Similar findings can be seen in Coskun (2014).

As for Sohail and Shaikh's (2004) study on students of King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, they found that "contact personnel" was the most influencing factor in student's satisfaction. However, physical environment, layout, lighting, classrooms, appearance of buildings and grounds and the overall cleanliness also significantly contributed to students' satisfaction.

Other than that, lecturers also play role in students' satisfaction. The effect a lecturer in the classroom can have on students' achievement is very crucial because students' achievement begins and ends with the quality of the lecturer, the instructional programme, and his or her leadership qualities (Vatta & Bhatara, 2013).

Duque & Weeks (2010) found that students placed importance on the outcomes of the lecture such as knowledge and skills gained, availability of class notes and reading material, coverage and depth of the lecture and lecturer's feedback on assessed work in their satisfaction towards academic staff dimension. Moreover, Muhammed Ehsan's (2010) study revealed that the essence of students' satisfaction lies in the quality of teaching and learning environment of institution as students demand the well qualified, learned and experienced faculty for their academic and professional development. The students want to be taught by those teachers whose knowledge, expertise, liberality and reasonability up to the mark.

In addition, the campus facilities of the university are very important to satisfy students in terms of student retention. This is because they spend most of their time there and utilize many of the facilities provided. Besides, Muhammed Ehsan (2010) indicated that the tangible facilities like class setup, digital labs and libraries, quality and reliability of the infrastructure and other facilities do contribute in creating the image of excellence of the education institution.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research design is determined by research objectives and research questions. This research is a descriptive survey as it aims to examine the level of customer satisfaction and intends to identify whether there are any significant difference in customer satisfaction among gender as well as between programs of postgraduates. To achieve these objectives, this research employed quantitative research design because it gives more accurate empirical data on the level of customer satisfaction as well as reveal the significant difference in gender and between programs among full-time Master students of a Faculty of Education at a public university in Malaysia.

### **Sample**

The population of this study was full-time coursework Master of Educations part three students in a Faculty of Education in one of Malaysian public universities. The faculty only offers three full time Master of Education programs via coursework mode. Based on the information from the office of Faculty of Education, there are about 56 full-time coursework Master of Education part three students in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Art Education, and Educational Management and Leadership in this faculty when the study was conducted. Rationale of choosing part three students is because this is their final semester studying in the faculty and they are also already familiar dealing with faculty's staffs and administration. Besides, the interest of this study is related with them as they are consumer who receives the services in the faculty and each of them had a different expectation and perception towards customer satisfaction in the faculty. Total population sampling method was applied in this study due to the small population

size. Out of 56 questionnaires distributed, only 42 were returned back (response rate=75%).

### **Research Instrument**

In this study, the instrument took the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: Section A and Section B with a total of forty three items. Section A focuses on the demographic data of the postgraduates between three programs. It consists of three items regarding gender, age, and program. The postgraduates were required to tick the information related to them in the boxes provided. Meanwhile, Section B answers the second and third research questions which are the level of customer satisfaction among postgraduates in the faculty as well as significant difference between gender and programs among postgraduates on customer satisfaction in the faculty. It is based on the questionnaire by Poturak (2014). This section consists of nine items on Student Satisfaction with Academic Staffs, ten items on Student Satisfaction with Non-Academic Staffs, five items on Student Satisfaction with Campus, five items on Student Satisfaction with General Services, five items on Student Satisfaction with Programs, and five items on Student Satisfaction with Educational Facilities. The method of response is a 5-point Likert scale with a scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, in which 1 indicated "strongly disagree", 2 indicated "disagree", 3 indicated "neutral", 4 indicated "agree", and 5 indicated "strongly disagree". The respondents ticked the scale that accurately described their response for each item.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researchers distributed 56 sets of questionnaire to full-time coursework Master of Educations part three students. They were informed to answer all items in the questionnaire and were assured of the confidentiality of the data gathered. However, only 42 questionnaires were returned back. Thus, it only covers 75% of response rate.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The completed questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS. To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used. Level of postgraduate students' satisfaction was divided to three different levels; low, medium, and high. Scores below 1.66 indicates low level, scores between 1.67 and 3.32 indicates moderate level and scores above 3.33 indicates high level. Next, to answer the second research question, Independent Sample T-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test whether there are significant differences of postgraduate students' satisfaction according to gender and program.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Postgraduate Students' Satisfaction Level According to Dimensions

Research Question 1: What is the level of postgraduate students' satisfaction in Faculty of Education, UiTM Selangor?

**Table 4.1 Postgraduate Students' Satisfaction Level**

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Students' Satisfaction with Academic Staffs	42	3.828	0.498
Students' Satisfaction with Programs	42	3.791	0.615
Students' Satisfaction with Educational Facilities	42	3.698	0.649
Students' Satisfaction with Campus	42	3.671	0.541
Students' Satisfaction with Staff Services	42	3.541	0.634
Students' Satisfaction with General Services	42	3.481	0.649
<b>Overall Mean</b>	42	3.668	0.564

Based on Table 4.1, postgraduate students' satisfaction level towards the faculty is high ( $M=3.668$ ,  $SD=.564$ ). The findings also indicate that all six dimensions scored high level. Students' satisfaction with academic staffs recorded the highest mean level ( $M=3.828$ ,  $SD=0.498$ ). It is followed by students' satisfaction with programs ( $M=3.791$ ,  $SD=0.615$ ). Next is students' satisfaction with education facilities ( $M=3.698$ ,  $SD=0.649$ ). Students' satisfaction with campus is ranked next with  $M=3.671$ ,  $SD=0.541$ . Students' satisfaction with staff services scored  $M=3.541$ ,  $SD=0.634$  and lastly is students' satisfaction with services ( $M=3.481$ ,  $SD=0.649$ ).

Students are described as customers of higher education because they are the group affected by the quality of service in higher education every day. As how customers are treated during the service delivery and the actual end result experienced by them eventually affects their judgment on the quality of service and their overall impression of the higher education institution, it is important to take into account students' current level of satisfaction (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). Moreover, by taking time to understand students' expectation and need, the management of higher education institution will gain useful information on the best ways to allocate resources and tailoring programs that will satisfy their students (Seymour 1992; Shekarchizadeh, Rasli & Huam 2011). When issues in the higher education institution are addressed, satisfied students are less likely to drop out (Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker & Groggaard 2002). Reflecting on the findings of this study, the Faculty of Education has opened since 1997. Hence, with 20 plus years of experience in managing the faculty, the management team probably is already well-versed in dealing with students' expectations and various needs which is evidenced by the high overall

satisfaction level towards the faculty among the students and the high mean scores of all six dimensions measured.

Apart from that, Duque & Weeks (2010) found that students placed importance on the outcome of the lecture such as knowledge and skills gained, availability of class notes and reading material, coverage and depth of the lecture, and lecturer's feedback on assessed work in their satisfaction towards academic staff dimension. Likewise, a survey conducted by The Student Room (2017) which is the largest online forum for student community in United Kingdom, revealed that for one in five students surveyed, the qualifications of university lecturers would affect their decision about where to study. These findings have been reconfirmed in our research where satisfaction with academic staffs dimension scored the highest mean score of satisfaction among six dimensions. The main goal of a higher education institution is to educate and produce skilled human resources that can contribute to the betterment of society and nation. Thus, in order to achieve this goal, all education institutions need to ensure that they have the most up-to-date syllabus that are being delivered by knowledgeable and interactive lecturers. This is in line with Voss and Gruber's (2006) findings that revealed students predominantly want to encounter valuable teaching experience to be able to pass examinations and to be prepared for their professions.

Next, types of program offered by a higher education also affect students' satisfaction (Arambewala & Hall, 2008). As the nature and content of programs that the students are studying in are highly related to their employment opportunities and future career paths, students are really selective when choosing their program. This is really apparent among postgraduate students because they have wide ranging choices of postgraduate programs of diverse fields from various universities with several study modes (full-time, part-time, coursework, research, mixed-modes). Based on the findings of our study, satisfaction with programs scored the second highest mean score of satisfaction among six dimensions. This means that the faculty succeed in offering and running postgraduate programs that are not only relevant with industry needs but also satisfying for the students.

### **Postgraduate Students' Satisfaction According to Demographic Profile**

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference between postgraduate students' satisfaction based on demographic profile?

### **Postgraduate Students' Satisfaction According to Gender**

**Table 4.2: Independent sample t-test result on postgraduate students' satisfaction and gender**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Male	16	3.731	.209	.441	40	.662
	Female	26	3.658	.394			

From the findings, it can be seen that both genders have high level of satisfaction (more than 3.33), but, male students scored higher satisfaction towards the faculty ( $M=3.731$ ,  $SD=.209$ ) than the female students ( $M=3.658$ ,  $SD=.394$ ). An independent sample t-test was later conducted to examine whether there exist differences between postgraduate students' satisfaction and gender. The result revealed that there was no significant difference between postgraduate students' satisfaction and gender ( $t=.441$ ,  $p=.662$ ). Since the p-value is more than 0.05, the assumption of equal variances of postgraduate students' satisfaction by gender groups was met. From the output, it was shown that the p-value was 0.662 that was more than 0.05. Hence, it failed to reject the null hypothesis. This shows that gender does not influence postgraduate students' satisfaction towards the faculty. Therefore, it can be concluded that postgraduate students regardless of gender are highly satisfied with the faculty.

### **Postgraduate Students' Satisfaction According to Program**

**Table 4.3 : ANOVA results for postgraduate students' satisfaction and program**

<b>Program</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
TESL	13	3.745	.428	2.403	.104
Art Education	14	3.800	.232		
Educational Management	15	3.523	.353		

Postgraduate students of all three programs have high level of satisfaction (more than 3.33). Art Education postgraduate students has the highest satisfaction level ( $M=3.800$ ,  $SD=.232$ ), followed by TESL postgraduate students ( $M=3.745$ ,  $SD=.428$ ) and Educational Management students ( $M=3.58$ ,  $SD=0.629$ ). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was later conducted to examine whether there exist differences between postgraduate students' satisfaction and program. The analysis was not significant,  $F= 2.403$ ,  $p= .104$ . Since the p-value is more than 0.05, the assumption of equal variances of the team effectiveness by department groups was met. From the output, it was shown that the p-value was 0.104 that was more than 0.05. Hence, it failed to reject the null hypothesis. This shows that program does not influence postgraduate students' satisfaction towards the faculty. Therefore, it can be concluded that postgraduate students regardless of programs are highly satisfied with the faculty.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Postgraduate students in the study perceived that they are highly satisfied with their faculty, Faculty of Education. Thus, the faculty has to maintain the quality of all six dimensions comprise of academic staffs, non-academic staffs, programs, educational facilities, campus and general services in order to ensure continuous high satisfaction among their students. It is also recommended that the faculty keep



conducting improvement efforts such as review program relevance regularly, send academic and non-academic staffs for professional development trainings and upgrade educational facilities.

Next, for future research, the researchers would like to use bigger sample that includes undergraduate students. Besides, future research should employ mixed methods research design to gain in-depth findings of students' satisfactions towards the faculty.

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