Academic Service Satisfaction and UNSOED Communication Science's Reputation: Insights from Mobility Students

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian National Student Mobility or *Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* (PMM) is one of the initiatives of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in order to improve the academic quality and diversity of students throughout Indonesia through an inter-island student exchange mechanism, either of the same type or across fields of science. Communication Studies Program at Jenderal Soedirman University (Unsoed) located in Purwokerto - Central Java, is one of those that has been mandated to receive and facilitate the program from 2022 to 2024. This research aims to identify the level of students satisfaction with the quality of academic services provided by the study program as a part of the projected reputation. Using a descriptive approach with the SERVQUAL method on 41 respondents (PMM students), the research shows: 1) 92.5% of respondents are satisfied with choosing the Communication Studies Program at Unsoed as a destination for the national student exchange program; 2) The level of satisfaction of PMM students with the academic services provided is quite good as evidenced by the difference score between performance and expectations in the range of -0.23 to -0.06 in the aspects of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and physical evidence; 3) Expectations for learning facilities and infrastructure are the highest expectations expected by students from outside the island regarding the quality of academic facilities at the destination campus. A university's reputation is enhanced by positive student experiences, which use social media narratives rather than paid publicity to create powerful public relations.

Keywords: Reputation; Satisfaction; Academic Services; Higher Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Nadiem Makarim's leadership period as Minister of Education, Culture, Research & Technology (2019-2024) is known for the Merdeka Belajar policy which provides learning flexibility for students, including for students at the higher education level. Through the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) platform, students have the flexibility to choose the form of learning activities that suit their interests, talents, and abilities to strengthen and/or support their learning achievements according to their field of science. A number of studies have shown that MBKM has provided its own benefits for students, such as stimulating creativity, innovation and critical thinking (Andayani et al., 2022; Kusumaningrum et al., 2022; Maghfiroh & Sholeh, 2022; Setiana et al., 2022) MBKM is also considered as a program that has benefits for stakeholders who are learning partners of a higher education institution (Pangruruk et al., 2022; Salsabila & Budiyanto, 2022) and no less importantly, this program provides an opportunity for students to have sensitivity towards nationalism (Pangruruk et al., 2022; Salsabila & Budiyanto, 2022;Anwar, 2022; Lusiana et al., 2022; Widjanarko et al., 2021).

One form of learning activity in the MBKM policy is student exchange program which is named by *Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* (PMM). Based on the ministry's policy, this program aims to shape students' attitudes in appreciating Idonesian cultural diversity, views, religions, and beliefs as well as opinions or original findings of others while being able to work together and have social sensitivity and concern for the community through learning experiences outside campus. This is in line with a number of studies on student exchange activities, where it can be described comprehensively, starting from interests, dynamics that occur during the activity, including positive and constructive impacts in terms of national ideology (Aulia et al., 2023; Maghfiroh & Sholeh, 2022; Sartika Pasaribu et al., 2023)

The Communication Science Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Jenderal Soedirman University is a study program that since 2022 has accepted inbound or exchange students from various regions outside Java through this program that organized by the Directorate of Student Learning - Directorate General of Higher Education. Until 2024, there have been three batches of students arrivals. Students who participate in PMM are those who have been selected at the national level and voluntarily choose their study program of

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choice, and for one semester will participate in lecture activities with a weighting of 16 credits and the Nusantara Module of 4 credits at the destination campus.

During those three series of implementation, monitoring and evaluation is needed, especially for the study programs that receive the students. Institutionally, the study programs have to be qualified according to the standards that have been set by the internal quality assurance mechanism at the university. However, the assessment of students as beneficiaries is certainly important, as part of efforts to improve quality continuously. In particular, the assessment of inbound students participating in PMM has its own privileges, because they have relatively no conflict of interest with the study program managers compared to regular students. This situation makes them more potentially assertive in evaluating the learning services implemented by the study program that accepts them. The purpose of doing evaluation of academic services is to assess the gap between student's expectations and their perceptions-*tangible* (facilities), *reliability* (consistency), *responsiveness* (timeliness), *assurance* (competence), and *emphaty* (care). Using SERQUAL will help identify areas that need improvement, such as response time or teacing quality. The results are used to enhance student satisfaction, service efficiency, and continous improvement in the learning process (Pasuraman et. al., 1988). This is in line with the nature of learning service evaluation which is an inseparable part of the academic management process that is of good quality, accountable and sustainable (Ikhtiarti & Nasir, 2022; Jayusman et al., 2020; Ningsih et al., 2020; Sukanti, 2009; Sumarmi & Wahyuni, 2016; Yusa et al., 2021).

This research became important, because the study program will get input from other perspectives, which can extent learning services that have been implemented and how the students perceive the services provided by the study program as beneficiaries of the lecture activities. Helps identify issues or challenges during implementation, provides feedback for improvements, and documents the program's successes and impacts on students and the study program In addition, this research has strategic benefits for study program managers, so that they can evaluate the quality of lecture services, both in terms of human resources, the learning transformation process, including the assessment of supporting facilities and infrastructure, and serve as a basis for decision-making and improving the program's quality in the future.

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RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with the SERVQUAL (Service Quality) method from (Parasuraman et al., 1988) to determine the gap between the perceptions and expectations of PMM students regarding the academic services they receive during their studies at the Unsoed Communication Science Undergraduate Program. The sample in this study was a number of populations of all students who participated in PMM activities from Batches 2, 3 and 4 totaling 41 people. There are five dimensions that are used to measure the gap, namely physical evidence, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance. The physical evidence aspect measures how students assess the learning facilities and infrastructure provided to them.

The reliability aspect focuses on the lecturer's qualifications in managing learning process. The empathy aspect explores how lecturers can create a learning atmosphere that motivates students. The responsiveness aspect emphasizes the lecturer's feedback to students in the learning process. The assurance aspect is about student confidence in the quality and services provided. The data analysis technique used is by using SERVQUAL analysis calculated by Perception Score $\pm$ Expectation Score with a range of -4 to +4, where the difference between perception and expectation will explain the level of satisfaction, where the lowest satisfaction is with the lowest perception score (1) minus the highest expectation score (5) as the highest satisfaction is with the highest perception score (5) minus the lowest expectation score (1).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Profil of PMM Students in Communication Science Program, Unsoed

Students of the PMM program in the Unsoed Communication Science Program consist of 3 (three) batches. PMM-2 (first batch students consist of 8 student), 3 students of whom are from Nusa Tenggara, 1 person from Sulawesi and 4 student from Sumatra. PMM-3 consists of 17 students, there were 13 students from the Sumatra region, 4 students from Sulawesi and Kalimantan. PMM-4 consists of 16 students, with 7 people from the Sumatra region, 4 people from Nusa Tenggara and 5 people from Kalimantan.

Table 1. PMM Inbound Students Studying in Communication Science Program

Batch of PMM	Sumatera	Kalimantan	Sulawesi	Bali & Nusa Tenggara	Maluku & Papua	Quantity
PMM Batch 2	4	0	1	3	0	8
PMM Batch 3	13	2	2	0	0	17
PMM Batch 4	7	5	0	4	0	16
	24	**7**	**3**	**7**	**0**	**41**

Based on data from Table 1, both in each period and overall, students from the Sumatra region dominated the PMM Program participants, namely 59%, followed by Kalimantan and the Bali and Nusa Tenggara regions, namely 17% and Sulawesi 7% respectively. Every year, students from Sumatra also always become inbound students in the PMM program with a range of 50% - 76% of the total students participating in the program. In addition, specifically for those from the Sumatra region, 37.5% come from Universities of North Sumatra, 20.8% from South Sumatra, 12.5% from Riau, and the rest from various regions in Sumatra. PMM students from the Kalimantan region, 85% come from South Kalimantan, while evenly from Sulawesi come from South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, and Gorontalo. As for Bali and Nusa Tenggara regions, 72% come from West Nusa Tenggara and 28% come from East Nusa Tenggara.

Table 2. Accreditation of Universities Origin of Inbound Students Studying in Communication Science Program at Unsoed

Accreditation of Universities Origin	Student Quantity	%
A / *Unggul* (Excellent)	21	51,2
B / *Baik Sekali* (Very Good)	19	46,3
C / *Baik* (Good)	1	2,5
	41	100

A university's accreditation status reflects an assessment of the quality of education, management, and infrastructure owned by the university. Universities with high accreditation status (e.g., A or excellent) indicate that they meet good academic quality standards, have

adequate resources, and implement effective management practices. In contrast, universities with low accreditation status (e.g., C) may have challenges in aspects of teaching quality, facilities, or management, which can affect their reputation and appeal to prospective students. Accreditation also relates to the university's ability to ensure graduates are recognized nationally and internationally. Table 2 shows the distribution of students based on the accreditation status of universities, 51.2% of students are from universities with an A (Excellent) accreditation, 46.3% are from universities with a B (Very Good) accreditation, and 2.5% are from universities with a C (Good) accreditation. The total number of universities involved is 41, with 100% of the students distributed across these accreditation categories.

The Unsoed Communication Science Program as the host of the PMM program shows its national commitment by accepting students with various levels of accreditation status, since 2009 it has been accredited A and in 2024 it was designated as Unggul (Excellent). This is an illustration that this study program adheres to the principles of implementing MBKM, especially in supporting efforts to reduce disparities in the quality of education between regions as determined by the ministry. In general, those who participate in PMM activities at this study program have been interested in studying on campus from the start. This is indicated by 85.4% of PMM 2,3 and 4 students choosing this study program as their first choice of learning objectives in the selection process carried out at the national level with the main source of information coming from fellow students, managers of the study program where they come from, the official website and official social media owned by the university (Table 3).

Table 3. Sources of Information about the Unsoed
Communication Science Undergraduate Program

Sources of Information	%
Fellow Students	22
Study Program Coordinator	19,5
Unsoed Official Website	17,1
Unsoed social media	12,2
Academic Advisor	9,8
Others	19,4
	100

Table 3 illustrates the sources of information utilized by students regarding the Unsoed Communication Science Program. Most of the information is obtained from fellow students (22%), followed by the Study Program Coordinator (19.5%), and the Unsoed official website (17.1%). Unsoed social media accounts contribute 12.2%, while academic advisors provide 9.8% of the information. Other sources account for 19.4%, highlighting the diverse ways students gather program-related details. All sources collectively form 100% of the information distribution.

The research also found the fact that the most motivating thing for inbound students to take part in exchange-based lectures in the Communication Science Program is that the courses offered in the curriculum are assessed in accordance with the learning outcomes set in the original study program, so that they are not constrained in the credit recognition process. In addition, the courses offered are quite diverse, so that they become an attraction in themselves, in addition to the 'magnet' to go to Java Island being a factor that influences their reasons for choosing to study in Purwokerto.

Tablel 4. Reasons for Choosing the Unsoed Communication Science Program
As PMM Destination

Reasons for Choosing	%
Curriculum that is in relate/accordance with the original study program	73,3
Unique/differently Course offerings not available in original study program	18,7
Want to explore Island of Java	9
	100

Table 4 outlines the reasons students selected the Unsoed Communication Science Program as their destination for the PMM program. The majority (73.3%) chose this program due to its curriculum alignment with their original study program. Additionally, 18.7% were attracted by unique courses not offered in their original study programs, while 9% opted for the opportunity to explore Java Island. These reasons account for 100% of the respondents. The research results also show that 92.5% of PMM Batch 2,3 and 4 students stated that the Unsoed Communication Science Program is a worthy destination as a choice for students who want to take part in similar activities in the future.

Analysis of PMM Student Satisfaction in the Unsoed Communication Science Program

Based on each aspect studied, the highest level of satisfaction is respectively *the reliability aspect* of 95.51% followed by the assurance aspect with a weight of 95.1%, the responsiveness aspect of 92.7%, the empathy aspect of 88.42% and the tangible aspect of 83.5%. The reliability aspect focuses on the qualifications of lecturers in learning management. The positive perception of PMM students towards lecturers in the Unsoed Communication Science Program can be seen with a score of 97.6% for discipline in delivering learning plans at the beginning of lectures. Lecturers are also considered to have mastered the material being taught (97.5%) as assessed as competent in delivering material (97.6%) and skilled in utilizing learning media so that students find it easier to understand lecture material (95.1%). Not only that, but the lecturers were also considered appropriate in giving assignments that were in line with learning outcomes (95.1%) as per the score of 90.2% which was given for the accountability of the lecturers' assessment of the learning process undertaken by students.

The assurance aspect is about students' confidence in the quality and services provided, where the positive perception of PMM students is given to the Unsoed Communication Science Program with a score of 95.1%. This is reflected in the score of 97.5% for the suitability of the material provided with students' learning expectations and 92.7% of PMM students' confidence in the quality of lecturers as professional educators. Meanwhile, the responsiveness aspect received a positive assessment of 92.7% from students who attended the lectures. 95.1% expressed appreciation for the willingness of lecturers to give students the opportunity to discuss lecture materials, including 90.3% who said that lecturers were easy to contact if students needed further explanation regarding the lectures. *The empathy aspect* as a dimension in exploring how the learning atmosphere takes place gets a score of 88.42%. The students gave a weight of 90.2% for the attitude of lecturers who never differentiate between the origins of both regular and exchange programs, including a positive perception that lecturers in the Communication Science Program environment are considered to always motivate students without exception (95.1%). Positive appreciation was also given to fellow students who are regular students, where 85.1% opened for interaction in lecture activities, including working on assignments together (80%) and being introduced to other students outside the classroom (91.7%). Meanwhile, related to the aspect of physical evidence as a measure of how students

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assess the learning facilities and infrastructure provided to them, PMM students gave a positive assessment of 83.5%. The laboratories and classrooms used received a weight of 95.1% and 87.8%, as well as the existence of E-Learning as a learning medium which was given a score of 90.2%.

Table 5. Gap in Perception and Expectations of PMM Students regarding
Academic Services in the Unsoed Communication Science Program

	Perception	Expectation	Gap	Qualification Gap	Quality
Reliability Aspect (X1)					
X1.1	4,71	4,85	-0,14	Moderate	Good Enough
X1.2	**4,76**	**4,97**	**-0,21**	**Moderate**	**Good Enough**
X1.3	4,54	4,56	-0,02	Moderate	Good Enough
X1.4	4,54	4,59	-0,05	Moderate	Good Enough
X1.5	4,34	4,39	-0,05	Moderate	Good Enough
X1,6	4,49	4,59	-0,1	Moderate	Good Enough
Mean	4,56	4,89	-0,1	Moderate	Good Enough
Aspect Assurance (X2)					
X2.1	4,61	4,63	-0,02	Moderate	Good Enough
X2.2	4,68	4,75	-0,07	Moderate	Good Enough
Mean	4,64	4,7	-0,06	Moderate	Good Enough
Responsiveness Aspect (X3)					
X3.1	4,66	4,71	-0,05	Moderate	Good Enough
X3.2	4,44	4,54	-0,1	Moderate	Good Enough
Mean	4,55	4,62	-0,07	Moderate	Good Enough
Empathy Aspect (X4)					
X4.1	4,41	4,56	-0,15	Moderate	Good Enough

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X4.2	4,54	4,61	-0,07	Moderate	Good Enough
X4.3	4,27	4,51	**-0,24**	**Moderate**	**Good Enough**
X4.4	4,22	4,12	**0,1**	**Moderate**	**Good Enough**
X4.5	4,51	4,66	-0,15	Moderate	Good Enough
Mean	4,39	4,49	-0.1	Moderate	Good Enough
Aspects Tangible (X5)					
X5.1	4,54	4,63	-0,09	Moderate	Good Enough
X5.2	4,29	4,44	-0,15	Moderate	Good Enough
X5.3	3,78	4,34	**-0,56**	**Moderate**	**Good Enough**
X5.4	4,61	4,71`	-0,1	Moderate	Good Enough
Mean	4,30	4,53	**-0,23**	**Moderate**	**Good Enough**

Based on the results of the SERVQUAL analysis, the aspects measured, that is reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangible show a performance difference between -0.23 to -0.06 which, when referring to the gap table from Pasuraman et.al (1988), means that the measurement difference is moderate and indicates that the quality of satisfaction is quite good. Research also shows that the physical evidence aspect has the highest gap, that is -0.23 and the reliability aspect has the smallest difference between perception and expectation, namely -0.06. In the physical evidence aspect, internet facilities are among those with the highest expectation gap, namely -0.56, followed by interaction between students in the empathy aspect, that is -0.24 and knowledge transfer in class by lecturers with a score of -0.21. However, what is unique is that even though there is a gap between perception and expectation regarding interaction, in terms of working on assignments together, there are expectations that exceed perception, which is +1.

Discussion

Quality and accountable academic services are actually an inseparable part of the Internal Quality Assurance System (*Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal*/SPMI) in a university.

This is in line with the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 53/2003 about quality assurance in higher education which emphasizes that higher education must be organized effectively, inclusively, and adaptively according to the dynamics of the development of science, technology, and community life. This research meets the aspects of learning standards, where the study program as the organizer of education has planned, implemented and conducted learning assessments and confirmed by students as learners. In addition, the research object in the form of students who take the PMM program is included in the category of facilitating the fulfillment of learning loads recognized by existing rules and regulations, in the same study program at another university (Ditbelmawa, 2024; Kemendikbudristek, 2023).

The perception of students as beneficiaries of academic services or learning in a study program is certainly important to see which aspects still need improvement, as well as which dimensions are good and must be maintained. This is important, as the main service users in higher education, it must be one of the main references for higher education governance to continue to be better and more sustainable. The research results show that all academic services have been implemented quite well, where the perception of students as beneficiaries of the dimensions of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and physical evidence is positive. This is in line with several previous studies, where reliability reflects the essence of institutional credibility supported by accountability by always ensuring that a university can provide what students expect (Asmawati et al., 2022; Chandra et al., 2019; Elistia et al., 2023; Faris et al., 2023; Marthalina, 2018; Mubarok & Moho, 2024; Permana et al., 2020).

The reliability aspect is the most influential factor in the perception of student satisfaction in academic services. This essentially shows that lecturers are the main and determining factor in the lecture process. Lecturers play a role as planners, managers and assessors of learning quality. The role as a planner is to ensure that the lecture study material is to support the learning achievements or profiles that have been determined by the study program related to student outcomes (Sitanggang et al., 2020; Yahdi et al., 2015). Students as the main beneficiaries of this process, it is appropriate to first know the reasons for attending a lecture, so that as adult learners they will be more responsible in the process. Manifestations of reliability can also be seen through the ability of lecturers to manage lectures, especially in

delivering materials with adult learning strategies, which prioritize authentic and motivating learning experiences. Not only that, through the use of intelligent learning media that is adapted to the students' learning styles, the learning outcomes in the form of the formation and improvement of students' knowledge, attitudes and skills in certain fields will be fulfilled (Arafat, 2022; Ismail et al., 2023; Tanta, 2010; Wulandari, 2011).

Articulation of reliability is also seen in the lecturer's accuracy in giving assignments to students. Assignments must be designed as a stimulus to meet the learning outcomes in the course. Not only that, but the lecturer's ability also to compile assignment procedures, starting from a description of what must be done, what steps are taken to carry out this, including assessment criteria. Lecturers should create an accountable assessment mechanism, in the form of categories, classifications and assessment weights for each element in a measurable and objectively confirmed manner. Something that also cannot be ignored is related to learning facilities and infrastructure. In addition to being established as a standard for higher education quality, the condition of lecture buildings and laboratories, including practicum facilities, internet and environmental comfort are very important in determining student perceptions, as well as forming a reputation.

It is important to understand that interest in participating in student exchange activities appears to be influenced by a few factors, that is the influence of peer roles, the role of study program managers, and exposure to information through websites and social media. This is not surprising, considering that they are psychologically entering the period of adolescent development tasks, where friends have a significant role in the decision-making process, interests and activities carried out (Dan & Farida, 2018; Febrianti et al., 2019; Purwandani et al., 2019; Unnisa & Sukwatus Suja, 2021). Likewise with the role of study program managers, where this is in line with research that 81.9% of communication science study programs throughout Indonesia understand the strategic meaning of MBKM, including student exchange activities and 86.9% of communication science study program managers in Indonesia have facilitated it in the form of recognition of learning on assessment transcripts. There is also the exposure of information through social media, illustrating the strategic function of information technology, pages and social media as information providers and shapers of audience behavior (Bestari et al., 2021; Istiyanto et al., 2022; Widjanarko et al., 2023, 2024)

CONCLUSION

Through SERVQUAL analysis, it was found that student satisfaction as beneficiaries in lectures is also determined by the extent of the gap between what they perceive about reliability, assurance, responsiveness and physical evidence with the reality they receive. Matters related to the quality of content and learning processes are the responsibility of the study program as the curriculum organizer. Of course, this is not enough, when it is related to the physical aspects or infrastructure that are the responsibility of the study program management unit, starting from the department, faculty to university level.

Based on this, to improve the quality of academic services for exchange students - including regular students - several things can be done, namely first, maintaining aspects in the form of learning quality, lecture process, academic atmosphere of lecturers and students and between students and accountability in assessing learning outcomes. Second, making efforts to improve facilities and infrastructure, both those directly related to preparing graduate profiles and creating a comfortable, safe and motivating learning environment and third, documenting and disseminating student activities in the learning process on social media, especially those owned by the institution or all those involved there. This positive perception is of course a constructive capital in managing the reputation of a university. Moreover, from the aspect of public relations marketing, whereas a digitally literate generation, students who are satisfied with the services provided have the potential to convey their comfortable experiences through social media. Instead of doing paid promotions, reputation becomes the driving force to narrate the capacity of a university as a provider of academic services that are academically accountable while providing a pleasant experience for students studying on campus.

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