

# Service Encounter Condition, Service Quality and Frontline Employees' Role in Higher Education

Taufani C. Kurniatun

[taufani@upi.edu](mailto:taufani@upi.edu)

Elin Rosalin

**Abstract**—Frontline employees (FLE), has an important role in supporting the successful delivery of services to support the achievement of customer satisfaction through the delivery service encounter. In a business environment services, customer satisfaction is often influenced by the quality of interpersonal relationships and interactions between customers and FLE. The research question is formulated to answer five things, namely: (1) What types of administrative service encounter. (2) How to program the service recovery (3) What were the qualification of FLE, (4) What was the Quality of Service Level, and (5) How was the relationship between the variables. Referring to the limits and in accordance with the purpose of the research that has been formulated, this study used Explanatory Survey Method. The population of study was frontline in West Java colleges; which consists of State Universities Non Owned Legal Entity (SUNOLE), State Universities Owned Legal Entity (SUOLE), accredited Private Universities (PU) and Non-accredited Private Universities (NAPU). The results showed that in general, services administrative at four kinds universities did not show a significant difference. The service delivery performance in all four types of universities shown that the range was quite good, especially in the aspect of new admissions selection, lectures preparation, lectures process and exams. An important finding of this study was that all the college had not shown the optimal performance in the services delivery, especially in the aspect of administrative employees' service attitude.

**Keywords:** *Service Encounter Service Convenience, Service Recovery, Effort, Service Quality and Switching Intension*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing services is an approach to improve the quality of education through the efforts in improving service excellence in the service delivery process and reduce the gap between user expectations with things provided by the service provider. The service providers need to reduce the gap between customer's expectation and reality. To achieve this objective, the service providers need to understand the way the customers make the evaluation process of the services offered [1]. The above conditions are expected to increase loyalty, the continuity in the education services delivery and to achieve the purpose of higher education. On the other hand, the focus on the customers and build relationships with customers is the key to success in business services [2]; [3]; [4].

Frontline employees (FLE) have an important role in supporting the successful delivery of services. In this regard, the importance of the FLE service providers' behavior especially related to the efforts to build the consumer trust and to understand the transformation mechanism from trust into loyalty in relational exchanges. There are three factors that

can create confidence in the FLE; i.e. operational capability factor (operational competencies), willingness to help consumers factor (service benevolence) and FLE orientation in solving problems (problem solving). On the other hand, FLE is a differentiation source and competitive advantage for the organization and also play a key role in anticipating the needs of consumers, adjusting service delivery and build a personal rapport [5]; [6].

Many of the activities were not running and functioning properly (dysfunction) caused by the behavior of employees in making contact with the customers (FLE/CCE) by making a deviant activity. As a result of this, the organization could have a disadvantage, in terms of both financial and non-financial, such as the decline in consumers' perception of the service performance; which leads to the dissatisfaction on the organization, losing trust and service encounter very susceptible to interference due to the dysfunction services. This is in line with the opinion that the most common service failures indicated with the customer's interactional failure; i.e. a failure caused by something that happened by the time the frontline employee treating customers (like coarse, not paying attention or hostile and the behavior in which identified as a service sabotage [7] and [8].

Thus, the FLE role in the process of service encounter allegedly considered very important in the achievement of service performance. This research will be disclosed further on how the administrative service encounter affects the service quality. This study is considered to be important due to the fact that it is in line with the demands of college prospects; which constantly strive to provide optimal service not only in academics but also in the administrative field.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

University's frontline employees (FLE) in this research was directed at these following four aspects: 1) the types service encounter administrative, 2) FLE qualification, 3) service recovery program, 4) Level of Service Quality

This study used Explanatory Survey Method. Sample research conducted on college students in West Java; which consists of In general, the administrative services at four universities, namely the State University of Non-Owned Legal Entity (BHMN), State Universities Owned Legal Entity (BHMN), Accredited and Non-Accredited Private Universities (PTS) showed no significant difference. The performances of service delivery in all four types of universities were shown quite good range, especially in the aspect of new admissions selection, college preparation, lectures and exams. An important finding of this study was those universities have not

shown the optimal performance of the services delivery, especially in the aspect of administrative employees' service attitude. In general, the attitude of the employees by the time of doing contact was still far from adequate.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Service Encounter Condition

According to the research service encounter conditions when providing the administrative services type can be seen in Table 1.

Table. 1 *Service Encounter Condition (SE)*

Service Type	Service Encounter Performance Category			
	State University Owned Legal Entity	State University Non-Owned Legal Entity	Accredited Private Universities	Non-Accredited Private Universities
Admissions Selection - Information Submission - Selection Schedule - Form Reversion	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
Class Preparation - Registration - Returning a study plan card - The study plan card ratification	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
Class and Exam - Course schedule information - Spatial (Room) Information - Main exam schedule - Class replacement schedule  - Grade Information - Delays of lecture information - The cancellation of lectures information	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
Contact service delivery - Face-to-face services - Receiving a phone call - Receiving complaints - Asked for an explanation - Emerged to make mistakes	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory
	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory
	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory
	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory

Based on Table 1 it can be seen that the general conditions of service encounter in college at the level was satisfactory. However there is still quite a lot that is at an unsatisfactory level, especially in the contact process at the time of service carried out. Both in public and private universities there are things that are not satisfactory in the service encounter.

## 2. Level of Service Quality

Based on the results of the study, the conditions of service quality in providing services can be seen in Table 2.

Table. 2 Service Quality Condition (SQ)

Aspect	Service Quality Category			
	State University Owned Legal Entity	State University Non-Owned Legal Entity	Accredited Private Universities	Non-Accredited Private Universities
Tangibility - Administrative personnel apparel. - Administrative personnel appearance. - The working tools used. - Administration services space.	Fairly Good	Extremely Good	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory
	Fairly Good	Extremely Good	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory
	Fairly Good	Extremely Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Extremely Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Extremely Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
Responsibility & Empathy - The responsibility of task completion - Problem solving Assistance	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
Responsiveness - Response to the complaint - Response to the problem - Response to criticism & suggestions	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good
Accuracy - Information Accuracy - Service Accuracy - Problem Solving Accuracy	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good
	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good

Based on Table 2 it can be seen that the general conditions of service quality in higher education at the level was satisfactory. However there is still quite a lot that is at an unsatisfactory level. The condition is most common are in private colleges accredited and not yet accredited.

## 3. Service Recovery Effort Program

The results of the study on the Universities Service Recovery Effort condition to improve the failures of services performed can be seen in Table 3:

Table. 3 Service Recovery Effort Condition (SRE)

Aspect	Service Quality Category			
	State University Owned Legal Entity	State University Non-Owned Legal Entity	Accredited Private Universities	Non-Accredited Private Universities
- Provide an explanation when things go wrong - Schedule replacement in the event of lectures cancellation - Cost replacement should there were losses due to the service delays	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Poor	Poor
	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Fairly Good	Dissatisfactory
	Poor	Poor	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory
Service Recovery Effort Condition	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory

Based on Table 3 it can be seen that in general that the service recovery efforts undertaken by all universities in general are still not adequate, that there are still many unsatisfactory or even worse.

This variable expresses on the students' feel or desire to move as a result of the administrative services they experienced. Based on the results of this study, the students' efforts or desire to move can be seen in Table 4.

#### 4. Students Switching Intention Condition

**Table. 4. Switching Intention (SI)**

Aspect	Service Quality Category			
	State University Owned Legal Entity	State University Non-Owned Legal Entity	Accredited Private University	Non-Accredited Private University
- The condition of administrative services caused the rising of desire to move (SI)	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly Agree
- Feeling nothing to lose to move in order to get better service	Agree	Agree	Not Agree	Strongly Agree
- Want to get out of college because of the inadequate services	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree
Switching Intention Condition	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Based on Table 4 it can be seen that in general the intention to move after obtaining unsatisfactory services is quite high, it mean that students tend to move if obtaining unsatisfactory service.

recovery efforts should be done so it could hamper the desire to make the switching intention.

#### 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Evaluation made by the students would be referring to the service quality description. As explained, the delivery of services involves several stages or processes [9]. As previously explained that the failure of the service encounter stage can cause significant costs such as repeating jobs, compensation, loss of customers and negative word of mouth [10]. However, other studies showed that the explanation of the mistakes made by the service providers could ease the disappointment of the failure of services provision [11] [12] [13]. At this stage it is very important the role of frontline employee to provide services directly to customers (students) and for the success of the service encounter process [2] [4].

The attempts to compensate, giving an explanation to consumers about the failure of service delivery were efforts being made to improve consumers' evaluation of the services they received. Service recovery refers to the number of actions taken by the organization to respond to the failure of services [1]. The service failure occurs because of four things: (a) the promised services were not available, (b) the services rendered slow, (c) the results were inaccurate and (d) the employee was rude or uncaring. The explanation or repair provided by the service providers could be able to foster the perception of fairness for consumers [14] [15]. Perceptions formed were expected to foster a sense of comfort and reduce the desire to move. Thus it can be assumed that service recovery efforts undertaken by the service providers can affect the relationship between the service encounter effectiveness and service quality.

In other words, should there was a failure in the service encounter and a bad evaluation on service quality, service

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In general, the administrative services at four types of universities, namely the State University of Non-Owned Legal Entity, State Universities Owned Legal Entity, Accredited and Non-Accredited Private Universities showed no significant difference. The performance of service delivery in all four types of universities shown quite good range, especially in the aspect of new admissions selection, college preparation, lectures and exams. An important finding of this study was those universities have not shown the optimal performance of the services delivery, especially in the aspect of administrative employees' service attitude. In general, the attitude of the frontline employees by the time of doing contact was still far from adequate.

Regarding to the service recovery effort, in general those universities have done the optimization of service improvements yet. It could be shown in the results of service recovery effort; in which likely to be dissatisfactory on the whole group of universities. However, if it was associated with the switching intention, then it revealed that only a few conditions caused them in wanting to move out from the campus. Further we need to identify the phenomena based on technological approach in service encounter or service recovery.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Zeithaml, Valerie A. dan Mary Jo Bitner. 2000. *Services Marketing; Integrating Customer Focus Accros the Firm*.
- [2] Lovelock, Christopher and John Wirtz. 2004. *Service Marketing: People, Technology and Strategy*. Pearson. Prentice Hall.
- [3] Davis, Mark M dan Janelle Heineke. 2003. *Managing Services; Using Technology to Create Value*. Mc Graw Hill.

- [4] Groonroos, C. 2001, "The perceived service quality concept – a mistake?", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 150-2.
- [5] Sirdesmukh, Deepak; Singh, Jagdip; Sabol; Barry. 2002. *Journal of Marketing*; Jan 2002; 66, 1; ABI/INFORM Complete pg. 15
- [6] Lovelock, Christopher., Wirtz, Jochen. Tat Keh, Hean. Lu, Xiongwen. 2005. *Services Marketing in Asia; People, Technology and Strategy*. Pearson: Prentice Hall.
- [7] Harris, Llyod C and Emmanuel Ogbonna, 2002. Exploring Service Sabotage: The Antecedent ,Types and Consequences of Frontline, Deviant, Antiservice Behavior, *Journal of Service Research*, Vo. 4 No, 3.
- [8] Harris, Llyod C and Emmanuel Ogbonna. 2006. *Service Sabotage; A Study of Antecedents and Consequences*, *Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science*, Vo. 34 No. 4
- [9] Verhoef, Peter C. et al. 2009. *Journal of Retailing* 85 Volume 1 p 31–41
- [10] Bitner, Mary Jo., Bernad H. Booms and Lois A. Mohr. 1994 *Critical Service Encounters: The Employee View Point*. *Journal of Marketing*. Vol 58 No. 4
- [11] Goodwin C, Ross I. 1992. Consumer responses to service failures: influence of procedural and interactional fairness perceptions. *Journal of Bussiness Research* Vol 25:149 – 63
- [12] Gordon, H.G., Mc Dougal; Terrence Levesque, "Customer satisfaction with services: putting perceived value into the equation", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 14 Iss: 5, pp.392 – 410
- [13] Mattila, Anna S. 2006. *The Power of Explanation in Mitigating the Ill-Effects of Service Failure*. *Journal of Service Marketing*. 20/7.
- [14] Daskalopoulou, Irene. 2008. Fairness perceptions and observed consumer behavior: Results of a partial observability model. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*. Volume 37, Issue 1, February 2008, Pages 31–44
- [15] Seiders, Kathleen and Berry, Leonard L.1998. Service Fairness: What It Is and Why It Matters. *The Academy of Management Executive (1993-2005)* Vol. 12, No. 2 (May, 1998), pp. 8-20