

# ANALYZING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION AMENITIES IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN TERENGGANU

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## Abstract

Provision of quality services is one of the most important priorities in higher education institutions. This quality comes from the combination of excellent learning process and students' satisfaction on the service delivered. Positive perception or acceptance on quality of services is vital to ensure the sustainability of higher learning. Therefore, this study aims to analyze students' perception towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu. The amenities investigated in the study consisted of lecture rooms, laboratory, cafeteria, hostel, vehicle and traffic, and electricity and water supply. The primary data of this study was collected using questionnaires. Participants of the study consisted of 108 students who were randomly selected. The study revealed that students' perceptions towards amenities provided were average with the score mean value 4.62. The students agreed that the lecture rooms provided by the university are mostly conducive and comfortable. However, the students were mostly not satisfied with the cafeteria. Thus, it is hoped that the finding of the study can give insights to the public university management to improve the amenities towards achieving sustainability of campuses.

**Keywords:** students' perception; higher education amenities; public university; gender differences; lecture room; cafeteria

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Students have a right to issue their own opinion and perception. They may agree and disagree with the service quality provided by their universities. Students are considered as the customers of a university, so their perception towards the university as a place for them is to get quality education is very important (Md. Mizanur, 2013). Hence, each university should ensure that their mission and vision to provide quality education is achieved. The significant purposes of higher education are to achieve their new knowledge, explore research works on different social and development issues, anticipate the need of the country's economy and prepare highly skilled workers (Md. Mizanur, 2013). Many higher

education institutions have been stimulated and influenced by service quality both for teaching and administrative support functions (Sarah, 2011). In fact, the effectiveness of the administration and management of a higher education institution facilitates the students with quality assurance and personality grooming so that they can take maximum out of it (Le Blanc & Nguyen, 1997). In academic institutions, students' perceptions of their learning environment have become a major area of attention and consideration for educators, managers and researchers. A study has reported that the feedback from students is very important for several reasons to improve quality of programs. It will be helpful for the educators to improve their level of service quality to create a positive image and perception in the mind of students (Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997). Thus, the management should provide opportunities for all staff and students to give their views on service quality that has been provided. Muhammad Ehsan, Rizwa & Ali (2010) posited a view that the students will be more motivated, loyal and good performers if their institution holds essential educational facilities with competent and resourceful teaching and training staff. In addition, students' view and expectations are also influenced by their cultural orientation (Kwan & Ng, 1999).

The proposed study will further explore the students' perception towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu. It is hoped that the inputs from the study will help the upper management to understand the problem better and take appropriate actions. The findings may also provide valuable information for future study in such area. The study investigated the students' perceptions towards amenities in the campus namely lecture rooms, laboratories, vehicle and traffic, electricity and water supply, cafeteria and hostel.

**Lecture Room:** The lecture room should be observed in order to foster cooperation and make the lesson effective (Hytham, 2015). The students' ratings on their motivation levels, perceived learning and teacher sensitivity were the factors most affected by class size. This is because larger class sizes circumscribe students' opportunities to receive feedback and interact with other students and teachers (Ehremberg, Brewer, Gamoran & Willms, 2001). Furthermore, after the socioeconomic status of the students, the most influential building condition variable that influenced student achievement was air conditioning (Lanham & James, 1999). A warm classroom environment can lead to an increased academic achievement and a sense of pride and belonging in schools (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). Hathaway (1987) has also mentioned that a conducive classroom promotes a sense of comfort in enhancing psychosocial environment in the classroom. Conducive classroom physical environment is an agent of intellectual stimulation and important factor in strengthening the child's educational development (Asiyai & Romina, 2014). Overall, the classroom environment plays a crucial role in keeping students engaged and allowing them to be successful within the classroom (Hannah, 2013).

**Laboratory:** Laboratory is a building, a part of building, or other equipped places to conduct scientific experiments, observation, tests, investigations and anything that are related to scientific laboratory. The environment of the computer and science lab has a significant influence on students' attitudes towards the courses of study (Newby & Fisher, 1998). Effective management of laboratory is a common goal to ensure the customers, for example the students are always provided with a good infrastructure to support their learning activities (Liong, 2011).

**Vehicle & Traffic:** Transportation is an activity of life processes that provide access to various activities to satisfy mobility needs of humankind (Arasan 2012). The improvement of the transportation provided by university can be achieved by getting feedbacks, comments, complaints or objections from the students as a customer. Gholamreza and Li (2014) found that the levels of satisfaction among students towards the vehicle and traffic system in Universiti Sains Malaysia are mixed with majority of students are satisfied with the facilities provided by the university. Meanwhile, Zahayu, Masnita, Lee and Ho (2014) suggested that facilities of buses, attitude of the bus drivers and reliability of the buses affected the students' satisfaction of vehicle and traffic services in Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Hence, to ensure the conducive environment in campus, these issues must be addressed thoroughly.

**Electricity and Water:** Energy consumption refers to an amount of energy consumed in a process or system, or by an organization or society. According to a report by International Energy Agency (IEA) 2013, energy consumption in the country is expected to record a moderate growth in the following years. Peretomode & Ugbomeh (2013) stated that if the provision of adequate funds were met, it would become easy for management of the university to provide electricity, water and educational facilities for the students.

**Cafeteria:** Cafeteria is a type of food service, which has no waiting staff for table service. Cafeterias are unlike restaurant, which is located in a complex building like office or malls. Cafeteria is likely to be associated as an eatery area that can be found in higher learning institution or schools. Shanka and Taylor (2005) indicated that students considered quality, price and service as the most important attributes in patronizing a particular cafe on campus. They also found that students were mostly satisfied with important attributes such as convenience, ambience and quality during their visits.

**Hostel:** A student hostel is a lodging facility that is designed with sharing rooms, toilets, and showers. Good hostel condition and facilities in university campuses have a positive influence on the overall student enrollment (Bekurs, 2007). Shahid, Irshad Hussain and Juhari (2012) argued that on overall basis, students perceive service quality at universities' residence halls to be slightly good. However, the analysis did indicate the fact that for the hostel management, a long distance is still to be covered to reach the level of excellence. In fact, it led to the decrease of students' overall perception towards the institution.

Among these six amenities investigated, Noremy & Fadilah (2011) revealed that the level of satisfaction of students on facilities and services provided at higher institution was at a moderate level with the students were most satisfied with the library facilities. The findings were consistent with Tuan Syarifah Atifah, Normalina & Mohd. Zulfazli, (2013) who found that students satisfied moderately with the service provided by Politeknik Banting. However, lecture rooms and laboratory facilities were found as the most conducive facilities in the campus. There is also evidence that there is a relationship between gender differences in students' perception towards amenities provided by higher education. A case study at Kuwait University by Alkandari (2007) investigated students' perception of the residence hall living environment. His study showed how students' perceptions were affected by gender, nationality and duration of residence. The study found that female and male respondents were significantly different in the way they perceived their residence hall environment: generally female students were more satisfied than male students. Furthermore, Sik Sumaedi, Mahama Yuda Bakti & Nur Metasari (2012) revealed that university students with different genders have a different perceived quality level on higher educational social activities and facilities.

### **1.1 Research Question:**

- i. What are the students' perceptions towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu?
- ii. Is there any gender difference in the students' perceptions towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu?

### **1.2 Research Objectives:**

- i. To analyze students' perception towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu.
- ii. To determine whether there is any gender difference in students' perception towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu.

### **1.3 Research Hypotheses**

From the research question, the following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: There is no significant gender difference in the students' perceptions towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The findings of this study give beneficial information on the perception of students towards the quality of amenities provided by public university in Terengganu. Thus, it will help the upper management team to improve their existing amenities in the campus to make sure that the service quality provided is at the satisfactory level which is in line with the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) requirement.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

The data collection of the study was done through questionnaire, which is based on survey. Respondents with a sample size of 108 students from different faculties at a public university in Terengganu were selected randomly. In this study, a set of close-ended and Likert scale questionnaire was used as an instrument. There are five sections in the questionnaire that are related to the amenities provided by the university. The questionnaire is divided into five (5) sections. Section A contains demographic information such as gender, age, faculty and hostel. Section B to F gather information on the amenities provided by the university such as facility management, lecture rooms, laboratory management, vehicle and traffic management, and electricity and water supply management. All the sections except for section A used Likert scale to measure all the statements in the questionnaire. The participants rated their responses on 7-point rating scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). All the data was analyzed using the Statistical Package in the Social Science Software (SPSS) version 20.0. The data was analyzed for descriptive and inferential statistics after the questionnaires had been collected from the respondents.

## **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **3.1 Reliability**

To check the consistency of results over a period of time, Cronbach Alpha test was applied using SPSS Version 20.0. The reliability analysis of all perception towards amenities provided by university was found to be 0.902. Related to the result, Sekaran and Bogie (2010) suggested that an adequate and appropriate score value to proceed with further analysis as all the values were above 0.70.

### **3.2 Demographic profile of respondents**

Table 1 shows demographic profile of the respondents. Out of 108 respondents in this study, 43 are males and 65 are females. Their percentages are 40.0% and 60.0% respectively. Most of the respondents are from the Faculty of Applied Sciences (63.9%) and others are from other faculties such as the Faculty of Business Studies and Accountancy. All respondents (100%) involved in this study are Malay students.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	43	40.0
Female	65	60.0
<b>Faculty</b>		
Applied Sciences	69	63.9
Accountancy	24	22.2
Business Study	15	13.9

### 3.3 Objective 1: What are students' perceptions towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu?

The means and standard deviation scores for each of the 6 items are reported in Table 2. The mean scores of the students' perception items ranged from the highest score of 4.94 (lecture room) to the lowest score of 4.19 (cafeteria). The results revealed that on overall basis, 65.9% of the students perceived amenities provided at the university to be at average level. The highest perception towards amenities ranked by the students was the lecture room (mean: 4.94). Their satisfaction is based on the conducive environment in the lecture rooms with comfortable design and setup as well as sufficient equipments. This finding supports Tuan Syarifah Atifah, Normalina and Mohd. Zulfazli, (2013) who found that students have positive perception with the lecture room provided by their institution. The finding is in accordance with the insights of Hathaway (1987) and (Asiyai & Romina, 2014) who stated that a conducive classroom played a vital role in enhancing students' intellectual activities and involvement in the learning sessions. The study also revealed that, students had the lowest perception towards the management and environment of cafeteria. Variety of food, price, cleanliness, and good service are important aspects that have influenced their decision. According to Noremy (2010), students showed the lowest score in their perception toward the cafeteria. They found that, institutions should improve the cafeteria provided by the universities.

**Table 2 The descriptive statistics of students' perception towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu**

No.	Variable	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
1.	Lecture Room	4.94	1.09
2.	Hostel	4.79	1.35
3.	Electricity and Water Supply	4.66	1.13
4.	Vehicle and Traffic	4.57	1.13
5.	Laboratory	4.54	1.32
6.	Cafeteria	4.19	1.33

### 3.4 Objective 2: To examine whether there is any gender difference in the students' perceptions towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu

The hypothesis was proposed to evaluate any difference in terms of students' perception towards amenities provided by university based on gender. To support the objective and research question of the study, the independent sample T-test was applied. The results suggested that there was a difference exist ( $t = 2.40$ ;  $df = 105$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, genders of the respondents influenced their different perceptions towards amenities provided by university. Male students gave higher perception on quality of amenities provided compared to female students. This finding is further in line with Azam Khatibi

(2013) who concluded that different genders have a great impact to the ways they perceived things in their lives.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research was conducted focusing on analyzing students' perception towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu. Using several testing procedures, the researchers came up with some conclusions that are acceptable to the logical explanation of the grounded theories. The researchers further concluded that the first objectives of the study involving six (6) elements; lecture rooms, hostel, electricity and water supply, vehicles and traffic, laboratory and cafeteria achieved students' satisfaction. Researchers in delivering a good quality services to ensure sustainable quality learning could be achieved also outlined a few recommended solutions. Lecture room is the highest element revealed by the student's perceptions towards amenities provided. As mentioned by Hannah (2013), classroom environment plays a vital role in keeping students focused with the lessons and classroom activities. Thus, the amenities provided may lead to the better learning process and students' development. The management of a public university in Terengganu should continuously maintain the supervision and improve the lecture room facilities to ensure students are comfortable and a greater satisfaction can be achieved in the future. Furthermore, the management of a public university in Terengganu should also focus on cafeteria management and environment since it contributes to the lowest students' perception towards amenities provided. The filthy cafeteria may result to students' dissatisfaction and poor service quality. This will not only affect the students' perception but also the image of the university generally. Hence, the top management should precisely offer the best services and facilities; yet manage the cafeteria better to ensure the service will meet the students' needs. A good quality of service definitely will contribute to the highest satisfaction among students and can lead to the implementation and achievement of sustainable campus.

Meanwhile, the result suggested that the second objective of the study is achieved. It revealed that there is a gender difference in the students' perceptions towards amenities provided by a public university in Terengganu. The researchers view this difference to the general belief that male students are complacent and tend to strongly agree with the quality of amenities provided compared to female students. Based on the finding, it is also recommended that the top management of the university should improve the amenities provided. This should be done not only by providing the amenities themselves but also in term of the management of these amenities. An excellent management will enhance the quality of services provided by a public university in Terengganu as one of the higher education institutions towards achieving sustainability of campus.

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