

Decoding Frontline Service Excellence: SERVQUAL Analysis in Northern Philippines' State University

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Abstract:

This research investigated the quality of frontline services at Isabela State University (ISU) using the Service Quality (SERV-QUAL) framework. It focused on the following dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The study aimed to assess ISU frontline services in relation to meeting the expectations of student leaders, the key stakeholders. The research employed a combination of descriptive research methods and inferential statistics. Data were gathered through survey questionnaires administered to a sample of Student Body Organization (SBO) officers in ISU System. Statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means were utilized to analyze the survey data, providing insights into satisfaction levels across different frontline service dimensions. Results indicate a generally high level of satisfaction among student leaders to the services provided by frontline offices, particularly in terms of reliability, assurance, and tangibles. However, areas for improvement were identified, particularly in responsiveness and empathy, suggesting opportunities for enhancing service delivery. This study underscores the significance of frontline services in shaping organizational effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction within higher education settings.

Keywords —Anova, Student Body Organization, SERVQUAL, Frontline, Higher Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Frontline employees in state universities constitute the face of the institution who are directly interfacing with students, faculty, and other stakeholders. Isabela State University (ISU), located in Northern part of the Philippines, has evolved into an institution of innovative research. As a prominent name not only in the Philippines but also in the ASEAN region. ISU is steadfast in its commitment to enhancing frontline services for students, employees, faculty, and other stakeholders. The significance of frontline services in influencing the quality of outputs delivered by ISU underscores the need for a comprehensive evaluation to understand how frontline services contribute to the overall quality of outcomes generated by the institution. To ensure quality service for the clients, Philippine government agencies evaluated frontline

services in accordance with the Citizen's Charter and Ease of Doing Business for Efficient Public Service Delivery Act of 2018. Determination of service quality impacts the overall satisfaction of both clientele and management [1,2,3]. Likewise, evaluation conducted on the frontline services of SUCs in the Philippines where attitudinal issues among frontline service personnel, inadequate records management in service offices, and facilities transpired underscores the need to be addressed by the management [4,5,6]. Furthermore, streamlining of transactions, efficient planning programs and other related issues emphasized the need to be addressed through training development and management interventions [7,8]. The evolution of the concept of service quality has been defined and refined by several notable researchers since the 1980s. Studies by [9,10,11,12] popularized the theory that led to the creation of the

SERV-QUAL model which provides a framework for evaluating service quality across various sectors. Service Quality (SERV-QUAL) Dimension model was used in different fields to effectively gauge the quality of their services to the customers using the different dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This model was applied to different bank services where results showed that service quality has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction of clients [13,14]. It was also effectively used in tourism and hotel services where several improvements were undertaken to improve the quality of frontline services [15,16,17]. Applied in the field of transportation services, it was found out that service quality has a significant positive influence on passengers' loyalty of public transportation companies [18,19,20]. The SERV-QUAL model, as a result-oriented quality of service study, was found useful in generating data in support to decision making for enterprise development, customer relations and loyalty [21,22,23]. This model was also utilized in academic institutions to determine the quality of services received by the clients [24, 25,26].

The same model was applied to measure the gap between expectations and perceptions in the client's evaluation where gap score indicated the unmet expectations [27,28]. Different Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines had crafted and implemented their Citizen's Charter as basis in the delivery of quality services to their stakeholders. In order to enhance the processes and the quality of services of frontline offices underscores the need to use SERV-QUAL model for it provides a framework in predicting client's view along the following quality service dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

In this study, the frontline services of Isabela State University were assessed using the Service Quality (SERV-QUAL) dimensions. Previous method in assessing quality service of the frontline offices was not based on this model.

Concept of Study

This study was anchored on the basic framework system of input-process-output. The input consists of student leaders profile in terms of year level, and frontline office evaluated. The inclusion of year level holistically represents the studentry. The survey questionnaires on the quality of frontline services were crafted based on the SERV-QUAL model to provide a systematic and quantifiable method for gathering feedback on various aspects of service delivery. The survey data was a valuable input that provided a data driven feedback which allowed the university management to determine the quality of service rendered towards developing mechanism for the improvement of services in the university.

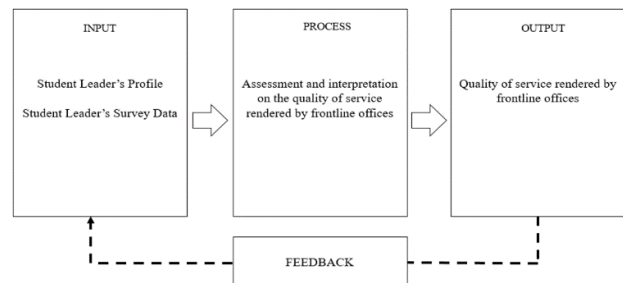


Figure 1. Concept of the study.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used an extensive research technique that included descriptive research methodologies and inferential statistics. The descriptive technique was used in frequency counts and percentages to systematically represent the characteristics of the respondents and evaluate their ratings on the performance of frontline services within the Isabela State University System.

Selection and Description of Respondents

The respondents were the student leaders of the university. Fishbowl sampling method and 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error, developed by Krejcie and Morgan's [29], was used in determining the respondents and sample size, respectively.

Table 1 shows the allocation of respondents. Out of 701 elected and appointed officers of SBO, 246 of them were taken as sample from the different campuses: Angadanan, 8; Cabagan, 55; Cauayan, 35; Ilagan, 9; Echague, 59; Jones, 19; Roxas, 28; San Mariano, 18; and San Mateo, 15.

Table 1. Number of Student Leaders Respondents per Campus

Campus	Number of SBO		Percent
	Population (N)	Sample (n)	
Echague	168	59	23.98%
Jones	54	19	7.72%
Angadanan	23	8	3.25%
Cauayan	100	35	14.23%
San Mateo	43	15	6.10%
Ilagan	26	9	3.66%
San Mariano	51	18	7.32%
Cabagan	156	55	22.36%
Roxas	80	28	11.38%
TOTAL	701	246	100.00%

Data Gathering

Data for this study were gathered using survey questionnaires on face-to-face platforms. The evaluation used the SERV-QUAL dimensions to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of service quality in terms of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The criteria of the dimensions were contextualized in line with the Ease of Doing Business in Isabela State University.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 21.0 application software applying the following statistical tools:

- The frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the profile of the respondents.

- Weighted mean was used to determine the respondents rating on the quality of frontline service.
- The 4-point Likert type numerical scale with corresponding range and descriptions was used in evaluating the mean values of the quality of frontline services. The scale was as follows:

Ta ble 2. Qu alit y De scr ipti on	Quality Description		
	Weight	Range	Level of Satisfaction
	4.00	3.25 – 4.00	Highly Satisfied
	3.00	2.50 – 3.24	Satisfied
	2.00	1.75 – 2.49	Dissatisfied
	1.00	1.00 – 1.74	Highly Dissatisfied

**III. R
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AND DISCUSSIONS**

1. Level of satisfaction in the implementation and delivery of quality frontline services in terms of tangibles was shown in Table 3. Results revealed that the 246 respondents were satisfied (n=246, \bar{x} = 3.53) with Registrar’s, OSAS and Cashier’s Offices being the top three (3) most preferred offices evaluated. Thus, the quality of service rendered by frontline offices satisfied the needs or requisites of the student leaders.

2. Level of satisfaction in the implementation and delivery of quality frontline services in terms of reliability was shown in Table 4. Results showed that the 246 respondents were satisfied (n=246, \bar{x} = 3.56) with Registrar’s, OSAS and Cashier’s Offices being the three (3) most frequent offices evaluated. This indicates that the quality of service rendered by frontline offices satisfied the needs or requisites of the student leaders.

3. Level of satisfaction in the implementation and delivery of quality frontline services in terms of responsiveness shown in Table 5. The results indicated that 246 respondents were satisfied ($n=246$, $\bar{x}= 3.53$) with Registrar's, OSAS and Cashier's Offices being the first three (3) most frequent offices evaluated. Thus, the services rendered by frontline offices met the level of satisfaction of the student leaders.

4. Level of satisfaction in the implementation and delivery of quality frontline services in terms of assurance was shown in Table 6. Results revealed that respondents were highly satisfied ($n=246$, $\bar{x}= 3.59$) with Registrar's, OSAS and Cashier's Offices being the first three most frequent offices evaluated. Thus, the quality of service rendered by frontline offices satisfied the needs or requisites of the student leaders.

5. Level of satisfaction in the implementation and delivery of quality frontline services in terms of empathy was shown in Table 7. It showed the mean and standard deviation of preferred frontline offices. Results shown that the 246 respondents were satisfied ($n=67$, $\bar{x}= 3.55$) with Registrar's, OSAS and Cashier's Offices being the first three most frequent offices evaluated. Thus, personnel in the frontline offices mentioned should improve their services. Thus, the quality of service rendered by frontline offices satisfied the needs or requisites of the student leaders and had no minimal shortcomings.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, the level of satisfaction in the implementation and delivery of quality frontline services in terms of SERV-QUAL dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, the respondents perceived that they are valued by the frontline officers thereby developing confidence and trust and the feeling of assurance in every transaction. The expectations of student leaders in each campus of ISU on the quality of frontline services were substantially met.

The findings reveal a generally high level of satisfaction among student leaders with the frontline services provided by offices such as the Registrar's, OSAS, and Cashier's, as indicated by consistently positive ratings across all SERV-QUAL dimensions. This signifies that these offices are effectively fulfilling their roles in delivering quality service experiences, fostering a supportive environment conducive to learning and administrative processes.

However, the study also identified areas for potential improvement, particularly in enhancing empathy and ensuring consistent service delivery across all frontline offices. These insights underscore the importance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation of service strategies to maintain high standards of service quality, and meet evolving stakeholder expectations through the employment of SERV-QUAL model in predicting service quality.

Moreover, the methodology employed, combining descriptive research methodologies with inferential statistics using tools like weighted means, percentage and, standard deviation, has provided robust empirical evidence to support the conclusions drawn. By systematically analyzing survey data from a representative sample of student leaders, this research contributes to evidence-based decision-making within ISU, guiding future initiatives aimed at optimizing frontline service delivery.

In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of frontline services in shaping organizational reputation and stakeholder satisfaction within higher education contexts. By adhering to principles of service excellence and responsiveness, ISU can effectively cultivate a positive service culture that supports its mission of providing transformative educational experiences to its diverse community of stakeholders.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation for Level of Satisfaction in the Implementation and Delivery of Quality Frontline Services for the Frontline Evaluated in terms of Tangibles

Statements	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1.The frontline office is fully furnished and has modern office equipment.	246	3.54	.55710	Highly Satisfied
2.The frontline office is visually appealing and comfortable.	246	3.47	.75274	Highly Satisfied
3.Frontline Employees are neat appearing.	246	3.60	.51370	Highly Satisfied
4.Materials associated with frontline services (such as pamphlets or charter statements) are visually appealing.	246	3.48	.61229	Highly Satisfied
5.The frontline office has comfortable setup for clienteles.	246	3.50	.60558	Highly Satisfied
6.The frontline office has well organized queuing system for clienteles.	246	3.52	.60499	Highly Satisfied
Grand Mean		3.56	Overall Rating	Satisfied

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation for Level of Satisfaction in the Implementation and Delivery of Quality Frontline Services for the Frontline Evaluated in terms of Reliability

Statements	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1. The frontline office performs according to the timeline as stated in the citizens' charter.	246	3.56	.56638	Highly Satisfied
2. When a clientele has a problem, the frontline office shows sincere interest in finding solutions.	246	3.52	.59118	Highly Satisfied
3. The frontline office performs the service with due diligence the first time (promptly).	246	3.48	.63852	Highly Satisfied
4. The frontline office provides the service according to the time as promised to do so.	246	3.53	.58394	Highly Satisfied
5. The frontline office insists on error-free records.	246	3.46	.63759	Satisfied
6. The frontline office opens promptly and observes no noon-time break per Civil Service policy.	246	3.50	.63876	Highly Satisfied
Grand Mean		3.56	Overall Rating	Satisfied

Table 5 Mean and Standard Deviation for Level of Satisfaction in the Implementation and Delivery of Quality Frontline Services for the Frontline Evaluated in terms of Responsiveness

Statements	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1.The frontline employees tell clienteles exactly when services will be performed.	246	3.57	.57312	Highly Satisfied
2.The frontline employees give timely service to clienteles.	246	3.53	.59074	Highly Satisfied
3.The frontline employees are always available and ready to respond to clientele’s request.	246	3.50	.59175	Highly Satisfied
4.The frontline employees are respectful and courteous (smiling and greeting) to clienteles.	246	3.54	.61757	Highly Satisfied
Grand Mean		3.53	Overall Rating	Highly Satisfied

Table 6 Mean and Standard Deviation for Level of Satisfaction in the Implementation and Delivery of Quality Frontline Services for the First Frontline Evaluated in terms of Assurance

Statements	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1.The frontline employees are consistently courteous and respectful to clienteles.	246	3.57	.60760	Highly Satisfied
2.The frontline employees are knowledgeable in answering clienteles' questions.	246	3.61	.53643	Highly Satisfied
3.The time frame for issuance of requested documents / office transactions is in accordance with the Citizen's Charter of the office.	246	3.56	.56638	Highly Satisfied
4.The requested documents are error-free / office transactions are properly conducted.	246	3.54	.60404	Highly Satisfied
5.Transactions in frontline office are always accompanied by proof of service (log or record books).	246	3.62	.54038	Highly Satisfied
6.Transactions in the frontline office are treated with outmost confidentiality.	246	3.65	.53500	Highly Satisfied
Grand Mean		3.59	Overall Rating	Highly Satisfied

Table 7 Mean and Standard Deviation for Level of Satisfaction in the Implementation and Delivery of Quality Frontline Services for the First Frontline Evaluated in terms of Empathy

Statements	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Descriptive Rating
1. The frontline employees gives the clienteles individual attention.	246	3.54	.58315	Highly Satisfied
2. The frontline office has employees who assist clienteles (with special needs / senior citizen) personal attention.	246	3.55	.57534	Highly Satisfied
3. The frontline employees could communicate well and understand clienteles' need.	246	3.58	.58510	Highly Satisfied
4. The frontline employees are sympathetic by providing the best solution or suggestion to clienteles' problem and complaint.	246	3.54	.62392	Highly Satisfied
5. The frontline employees are friendly and polite.	246	3.57	.64118	Highly Satisfied
Grand Mean		3.55	Overall Rating	Highly Satisfied

Table 8. Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation for thr Level of Satisfaction in the Implementation and Delivery of Quality Frontline Services in five (5) Parameters across SERV-QUAL dimensions

Campus	Citizen’s Charter Mean						Grand Mean	Descriptive Rating
	N	Tangibles	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy		
Echague	59	3.20	3.11	3.16	3.25	3.20	3.18	Highly Satisfied
Jones	19	3.60	3.67	3.67	3.69	3.66	3.65	Highly Satisfied
Angadanan	8	3.58	3.60	3.53	3.72	3.54	3.59	Highly Satisfied
Cauayan	35	3.58	3.60	3.62	3.70	3.64	3.62	Highly Satisfied
San Mateo	15	3.68	3.59	3.71	3.66	3.66	3.66	Highly Satisfied
Ilagan	9	3.33	3.38	3.38	3.58	3.55	3.44	Highly Satisfied
San Mariano	18	3.82	3.81	3.80	3.83	3.71	3.79	Highly Satisfied
Cabagan	55	3.38	3.33	3.39	3.35	3.29	3.34	Highly Satisfied
Roxas	28	3.67	3.59	3.59	3.63	3.59	3.61	Highly Satisfied
TOTAL	246						3.54	Highly Satisfied

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