



The Service Quality Perception in Student Affairs: A Single Institutional Experience

Öğrenci İşlerinde Hizmet Kalitesi Algısı: Kurumsal Bir Deneyim

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ABSTRACT: The quality perception of the services that support university education (like the student affairs unit) involves a significant discussion when these services are related to the behaviors of the students regarding satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to measure the overall satisfaction of H.U. students regarding the Student Affairs Office Directorate (SAOD). It will also evaluate the perception of students regarding the service quality, and to observe the direction in which the quality perception of the students regarding Student Affairs Office Directorate (SAOD) varies. It will be noted how it depends on class levels and visit frequencies and the relation between these perceptions and general satisfaction level of the students regarding the SAOD via the SERVQUAL scale. According to the results, the satisfaction level of H.U. students regarding the SAOD is significantly low. Besides, the students perceive the Reliability dimension among the SERVQUAL dimensions as the highest quality and the Responsiveness dimension as the lowest quality dimension. As the class level of the student goes up, the quality perception of the SAOD goes down and as the number of visits decreases, the quality perception increases. Finally, it is determined that the entirety of the service quality dimensions affects the overall satisfaction level of students regarding the related unit.

Keywords: student affair, service quality, SERVQUAL

ÖZ: Üniversite eğitimini destekleyen hizmetlerin (öğrenci işleri birimi gibi) kalitesi tüm dünyada son dönemlerde tartışılmaya başlanmıştır ve bu tartışmaların önemli bir nedeni, söz konusu hizmetlere ilişkin kalite algısının; öğrencilerin tatminleri ile ilişkili olmasıdır. Dolayısıyla, çalışmanın amacı H.Ü. öğrencilerinin Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı'na (ÖİDB) ilişkin olarak genel tatmin düzeylerinin ölçülmesi, bunun yanı sıra öğrencilerin hizmet kalite boyutlarına yönelik algılarını değerlendirmesi, sınıflara göre ve ziyaret sıklıklarına göre öğrencilerin ÖİDB'ne ilişkin kalite algılarının ne yönde farklılaştığının saptanması ve bu algılar ile öğrencinin ÖİDB'ne ilişkin genel tatmin düzeyi arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Bulunan sonuçlara göre, H.Ü. öğrencilerinin ÖİDB'ne ilişkin genel tatmin düzeyleri oldukça düşüktür. Bunun yanı sıra, öğrenciler ÖİDB'ne ilişkin olarak SERVQUAL boyutlarından *Güvenilirlik* boyutunu en kaliteli, *Cevap Verebilme* boyutunu da en kalitesiz boyut olarak algılamaktadırlar. Bir öğrencinin okuduğu sınıf düzeyi arttıkça, ÖİDB'ne ilişkin kalite algıları düşmekte, ziyaret sıklığı azaldıkça kalite algıları artmaktadır. Son olarak, algılanan hizmet kalite boyutlarının tümünün öğrencilerin söz konusu birime ilişkin genel tatmin düzeylerini etkilediği bulunmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: öğrenci işleri, hizmet kalitesi, SERVQUAL ölçeği

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher levels of quality are essential for service providers in order to obtain an effective positioning in the market (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Thus, service providers can attract customers by overlapping their expectations and perceptions of service quality. Although service quality is a key point in marketing, it also deserves consideration in higher education. Some scholars have confirmed that, while consumers are becoming increasingly more value conscious, they tend to complain about unsatisfactory services (Gronhaug and Arndt, 1991; Quelch and Ash, 1981). In today's competitive world, as it is in other services, the students who want to have a higher education are faced with many options. Because of this, higher educational institutions seek to find ways to increase the satisfaction level of the students, and not only their education quality. Starting from this point of view, researchers today have been performing studies on the

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affecting factors in order to build strong relations with higher education students and be successful in the competitive environment. For instance, according to Pariseau and McDaniel (1997), students, parents, and employees constitute the consumers of higher education, and it is thought that there is a significant gap between expected performance and actual performance. Accordingly, the measuring of students' evaluations regarding the services provided by higher educational institutions has become the center of attention in many discussions. As a result of all these discussions, it is determined that the market-oriented models could be adapted to the education sector and SERVQUAL, as one of the market-oriented models, has been used in studies to measure many educational services.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988) have developed the SERVQUAL model in order to measure the service quality. SERVQUAL is based on the assumption that "satisfaction is achievement at the point where service quality perception meets or exceeds the customer expectations." According to this model, the SERVQUAL scale that is formed, (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml, 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988, 1994) measures the quality perception of customers in five main groups. Those main groups are lined up as Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Tangibles. Among these dimensions, Assurance explains the skill of the employees to evoke the feeling of trust in customers with their knowledge and courtesy. Another dimension, Empathy, means that the service personnel should put themselves in the customers' shoes and show a personal interest in the customers. The Reliability dimension is defined as the ability to realize the promised service correctly and reliably, and Responsiveness means that the employees should help the customers and provide the service quickly. Finally, Tangibles mean the physical opportunities, tools, and devices and the overview of the staff of a company or an institution. (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

It can be observed in the literature that the SERVQUAL model is appropriate for measuring the quality perception of educational services and has been used in studies. For instance, the mentioned model is used for service quality perception measurement at business schools (Rigotti and Pitt, 1992) and higher educational institutions (Cuthbert, 1996; Soutar and McNeil, 1996; Saaditul, Samsinar and Wong, 2000).

Thus, the aim of the study is to measure the overall satisfaction of H.U. students regarding the SAOD, besides evaluating the perception of students regarding the service quality. It is to also observe the direction in which the quality perception of the students regarding Student Affairs Office Directorate (SAOD) varies, depending on class levels and visit frequencies and the relation between these perceptions and general satisfaction level of the students regarding the SAOD via the SERVQUAL scale.

1.1. Service Quality in Student Affairs

In the educational literature, scholars identify the importance of satisfaction levels of university students. For instance, Ekinci and Burgaz (2007), try to determine the expectation and satisfaction levels of the students of all faculties in Hacettepe University with regard to academic services delivered by the University. Also in a study by Teo (2001), the factors, which are effective to satisfy the students who are also known as "potential customers" and to gain them as students at universities, have been examined. Although the service quality is found to be one of the major antecedents of satisfaction, service quality perception in educational services is discussed in relation to the factors affecting satisfaction of university students. Therefore, some groups of researchers (Christmen and Philbrick, 1993; Delene and Bunda, 1991; Edwards, 1993; Seymour, 1992; Sutcliffe and Pollock, 1992) recognized the importance of supportive services quality.

In one of the first studies conducted on this matter by Cuthbert (1996), the service quality dimensions of a higher education have been listed based on the perception of students, and

Tangibility (3.34) has been reported as the highest quality perceived dimension. According to Cuthbert, this dimension is followed by Assurance (3.21), Reliability (3.11), Responsiveness (3.04), and Empathy (2.58) dimensions, respectively; however, these findings do not indicate that “tangibility” is the dimension that has the biggest effect on satisfaction. The study by O’Neill and Palmer (2004) supported the findings of a pioneering study¹. When the evaluations of the university for which they conducted the study were observed, “tangibility” was found to be the highest quality dimension in all scores, however, it has been concluded that it has the lowest level in the priority listing of the student. Study findings of Perisau and McDaniel (1997) have pointed out that the assurance and reliability dimensions have been the most significant dimensions for the evaluation of faculty and the business school and the most important points for the student are the “knowledge” and “trust” concepts, which are under the “assurance” dimension. Also in Turkey, Yılmaz, Filiz, and Yaprak used SERVQUAL in order to determine the perceived service quality of university students. Thus, they found that, responsibility and assurance dimensions are the most important dimensions in perception of service quality in universities. In addition, Sahin (2009) tried to examine the service quality in university education.

According to Smith and Ennew (2001), who have offered a different point of view regarding the significance of the “Tangibility” dimension, found two of the factors that affect the consumer satisfaction- it might be hard to make a choice between affectivity and technical functionality. For instance, when a student buys a service, s/he can evaluate it based on the reliability (technical functionality) of that service or the courtesy or empathy (affectivity) of the person providing that service. A reliable service might have the attributes that the student needs, but not be up-to-date and this might cause a negative effect on the student who wants to have an up-to-date service. Thus, scholars support these findings and recognize that positive perception of the service quality is one of the most significant factors that increase the satisfaction of students (Mahiah, Suhaimi, and Ibrahim, 2006; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985). Additionally, the study of Smith and Ennew (2001) demonstrates that supportive services such as the cafeteria, dorm, etc., might have a direct or an indirect effect on the satisfaction of the student with the university.

In recent years, the literature has contained additional studies that observe the environmental factors, which affect the satisfaction with the university. According to Umbach and Porter (2002), the *number of faculties* is an important factor in explaining the satisfaction of the student in the educational sector. Another of these factors is the *reputation* of the university, which is directly related to the overall image of the higher educational institution (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1997). In a more detailed study by Ford, Joseph, and Joseph (1999) on the service quality, they have compared New Zealand and American students. It has been concluded that *academic reputation* has been the most significant factor while choosing the university for the students in New Zealand; however, *career opportunities, costs, tangible conditions, and location* have been more important ones for the students in the USA. In addition to the studies mentioned above, studies, which examine the administrative aspects of educational institutions, exist in the literature like the studies of Kamal and Ramzi (2002). According to this study, the perception of the student regarding services, such as registration or counseling, is important in order to increase the perceived service quality.

In some studies on increasing the service quality of supportive services, (Christmen and Philbrick, 1993; Delene and Bunda, 1991; Edwards, 1993; Seymour, 1992; Sutcliffe and Pollock, 1992) examinations have been performed for student affairs administrators. However, there are so few studies in the literature (Ruby, 1998) which have used the SERVQUAL model to measure the service quality of the student affairs office. At this point, our study has the purpose of making a

¹ See Cuthbert (1996)

significant contribution by expanding the related foreign literature and becoming the first study performed on the SAOD in Turkish literature.

However, it has been determined that the perception of supportive services as of good quality has had a significant effect on the stay of the student at the university (not passing on to a different university) (Hossler and Bean, 1990; Thomas, 1990). It also has a relation to the learning levels of students (Stodt, 1987) and recommending their institutions to other students (Pate, 1990) as well. Accordingly, reliable evaluation of student supportive services has become an important subject and studies regarding the application of market-oriented models, which were formed to measure the service quality for the purpose of evaluating students' satisfaction on the supportive services, have started to be included in the literature (Delene and Bunda, 1991; Seymour, 1992). Starting from this point, SERVQUAL, a market-oriented model, will be used in order to measure the satisfaction level and quality perception of the students at a higher educational institution in Turkey regarding the student affairs services.

The organization has to provide some benchmark prior to the design of market-oriented models. Those benchmarks are (a) the fact that the basic product provided is "intangible," (b) that the consumer is present at the moment when the product is provided, and (c) that the production and consumption of the product take place at the same time (Gronroos, 1990; Parasuraman, 1991). In order to make an evaluation regarding the benchmarks mentioned above, it should be known that the student affairs of a higher educational institution is an organization that meets the mentioned benchmarks.

Accordingly, this study aims both for the adaptation of the SERVQUAL model on educational support services in order to measure the service quality perception of the student affairs and the measurement of satisfaction levels and service quality perceptions of the H.U. students regarding the SAOD at their university.

In summary, the purpose of this study is to test the hypotheses below:

H1: The satisfaction level of H.U. students regarding the SAOD at their university is high.

H2: The service quality perception of the H.U. students regarding the SAOD at their university is diversifying.

H3: The perception of service quality dimensions by the H.U. university students regarding the SAOD at their university, which are (a) Tangibles, (b) Reliability, (c) Responsiveness, (d) Assurance, and (e) Empathy, can vary depending on the class level they study.

H4: The perception of service quality dimensions by the H.U. university students regarding the SAOD at their university, which are (a) Tangibles, (b) Reliability, (c) Responsiveness, (d) Assurance, and (e) Empathy, can vary depending on the frequency of visits.

H5: The perception of service quality dimensions by the H.U. university students regarding the SAOD at their university, which are (a) Tangibles, (b) Reliability, (c) Responsiveness, (d) Assurance, and (e) Empathy, affects their satisfaction with the SAOD positively and significantly.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

The purpose of the study is to adapt the SERVQUAL model on educational support services in order to measure the service quality perception of the student affairs and to measure the effects of the quality perception regarding the student affairs on the student's overall satisfaction about the university. Accordingly, the data was collected by the survey method, which included the SERVQUAL scale and overall satisfaction questions.

The survey study was conducted on the web via e-mails for 49 days between 18/10/2012 and 05/12/2012. Even though web-based researches have the substantial possibility of restricting the attendance of each object in the universe within the sampling because they can reach only the ones who use e-mails, when compared to other surveys conducted by mailing or face to face, they have a bigger sampling access, more speed, more flexibility, and cost-effectiveness. The survey used in this study was web-based and PHP programming language, Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), Cascaded Style Sheets (CSS), and an Oracle database server were used for the configuration of the web interface. On the other hand, an IP control was applied in order to prevent multiple survey attendance from a single source and survey responses from the same IP have been filtered.

2.1.1. Sample

The main mass of the study is formed from 30,000 students registered at the H.U. as of 01.10.2012². The email addresses of all of these students were obtained and the survey was sent. The total number of students who answered the survey is 4836 and the response ratio is 16 %. In another study on the same matter (Ruby, 1998), 748 students were surveyed. Therefore, the 4836 surveys used in this study can be considered as a significant superiority in comparison to other surveys in the literature.

2.2. Research Instruments

SERVQUAL scale. The SERVQUAL scale was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988) in order to measure the service quality perceived and is a scale based on the assumption that “satisfaction is achievement at the point where service quality perception meets or exceeds the customer expectations.” Because of this, the scale evaluates the difference between the “expectations” and “perceptions” of the consumer with a 5-point Likert scale and this difference can be interpreted as between “ideal quality” and “absolutely unacceptable quality.” Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) have argued that the negative discrepancy between perceptions and expectations would result in dissatisfaction, and the positive discrepancy would result in the happiness of the consumer. They have determined 22 items to measure the service quality perception of the consumers based on their empirical study, and they have distinguished those perceptions in five dimensions as Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Tangibles. High points in the 5-point Likert type scale indicate that the quality perception is evaluated as positive and the low points indicate the negative evaluation. Ruby (1998) had tried to measure the quality perception of the students regarding student affairs by using the SERVQUAL scale in his study. Accordingly, our study includes the questions of this scale.

Besides the SERVQUAL scale, overall satisfaction questions regarding the SAOD, university, and demographic questions such as gender, faculty, class level, and frequency of visits were included in the study.

2.2.1. Normality and Reliability

The normality and reliability of research instruments. In order to test the reliability of the SERVQUAL scale used in the question paper of the study, the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was observed and the result for the scale is (93%) is above 70%; therefore it is high according to

² The data of this study were collected for “Hacettepe University Student Affairs Infrastructure Empowerment Project”.

the 60% suggested by Hair et al. (2000:391) and 70% suggested by G. D. Garson³. Therefore, it has been concluded that it has an acceptable attribute.

In order to perform the normality test for the expressions on the question paper, Skewness and Kurtosis analyses were executed. The skewness and kurtosis values of the expressions were determined with these tests and when the results were examined, it was concluded that the skewness and kurtosis values were between the recommended values of +2 and -2 (Shao, 2002; 424-426). Accordingly, skewness and kurtosis values support the normal distribution of the data.

In addition, in order to screen the data for normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance assumptions, Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) was conducted to examine whether or not a common method of variance may have increased the strength of the correlations. This is because all the data were collected from one survey package. All SERVQUAL items were entered together into a factor analysis, and the results of the unrotated factor solution were examined. The analysis produced 5 factors, with the first factor explaining 48% of variances for the SERVQUAL. As a result, no single factor accounted for the majority of the covariance and no general factor was apparent, suggesting that a common method variance was not a serious issue in this study.

In order to see how far the expressions on the question paper explain the variables that were to be measured, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The analysis shows how far the goodness of fit statistics and the data set match the dimensions (variables) (Şimşek, 2007; 5-7).

Fitness values of the Service Quality Perception Dimension within the suggested model are given in Table 1. Should the RMR and RMSEA values be smaller than 0.05, this means the model is perfectly fit and the 0.08 value indicates that it is an acceptable limit. (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller, 2003).

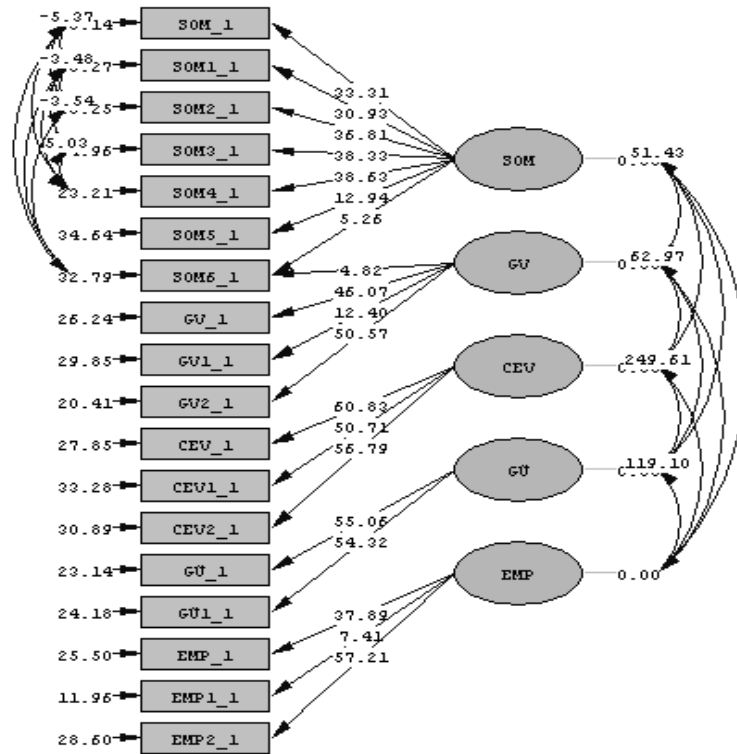
Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Service Quality Perception Dimensions' Goodness of Fit Results

<i>Goodness of Fit Indicator</i>	<i>Value Obtained</i>
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error Approximate)	0.0669
NNFI (Non-normalized Fitness Index)	0.949
CFI (Comparative Fitness Index)	0.964
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	0.946
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	0.913
RMR (Root Mean Square)	0.0715
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square)	0.0313

In Figure 1, the figure obtained for the Service Quality Perception Dimensions as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis is presented. The values in the figure are the t values, which

³ Taken from the link: G. D. Garson, "Quantitative Research in Public Administration", (<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/structur.htm>) on 02.02.2010.

indicate whether the coefficient of each observed variable is significant or not. The critical t value at 95% reliability dimension is 1.96, accordingly, t values under 1.96 are not significant and should be excluded from the analysis (Şimşek 2007:86). It is determined that the t values of the observed variables regarding all dimensions of the service quality perception included in the study are above 1.96 and significant on the 95% reliability dimension.



Chi-Square=1396.57, df=106, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.067

Figure 2.1. Diagram Obtained for the Service Quality Perception Dimensions as a Result of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

SOM: Tangibles, GV: Assurance, CEV: Responsiveness, GÜ: Reliability, EMP: Empathy

2.3. Data Analyses

Linear regression was performed for the testing of hypotheses of the study and one-way variance analysis (Anova) was performed for the predicted difference tests.

3. FINDINGS

In the first hypothesis of the study, it was predicted that the overall satisfaction level of H.U. students about the SAOD at their university would be high. In order to test this hypothesis, the Frequency test results for this purpose are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency Results for the Satisfaction Levels of H.U. Students Regarding the SAOD

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Satisfaction Level			
Very Low	361	7.6	7.6
Low	1025	21.4	29.0
Not Sure	1745	36.5	65.5
High	1552	32.5	98.0
Very High	57	2.0	100.0
Missing	57	1.2	
Total	4836	100.0	

As seen in Table 2, the overall satisfaction levels of H.U. students regarding the SAOD are considerably low (65.5 %). There was a 7.6 % of the students evaluating the overall satisfaction level as “very low.” A section of 21.4% evaluated the overall satisfaction level as “low” and a section of 36.5% evaluated it as “not sure.” Only 34.5% of the students evaluated the overall satisfaction level as high. In other words, H.U. students are not satisfied with the SAOD at their university. Based on this, **H1 has not been supported.**

In the second hypothesis of the study, (H2), it was predicted that the service quality perception of H.U. students regarding the SAOD at their university might differ. In order to test this hypothesis, mean values examined are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Results for the Service Quality perception of H.U. Students Regarding the SAOD

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dimensions			
Tangibles	4836	3.06	0.66
Reliability	4836	3.42	0.82
Responsiveness	4836	2.79	0.94
Assurance	4836	3.36	0.78
Empathy	4836	2.93	0.86

As it can be seen in Table 3, the quality perception of H.U. students regarding the services they receive from the SAOD varies depending on the dimensions. Based on the average results, the Reliability dimension is perceived as the *highest quality* dimension among the students (3.42). This is followed by Assurance (3.36), Tangibles (3.06), and Empathy (2.93) respectively. Besides, Responsiveness is perceived as the least quality dimension (2.79). According to this, **H2 has been supported.**

In the H3 hypothesis, it was predicted that the service quality dimensions regarding the SAOD might be perceived differently according to the class level. Results of the ANOVA test performed in order to test this hypothesis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for the Service Quality Perception Regarding the SAOD Depending on Class Levels

Dimensions	Group	N	Ort	Ss	F	p
Tangibles	1	1395	3.15	0.62	20.57**	.000
	2	1144	3.08	0.65		
	3	966	3.00	0.67		
	4	1059	2.96	0.69		
Reliability	1	1395	3.43	0.81	12.419**	.000
	2	1144	3.44	0.82		
	3	966	3.41	0.83		
	4	1059	3.39	0.83		
Responsiveness	1	1395	2.88	0.90	10.650**	.000
	2	1144	2.83	0.95		
	3	966	2.73	0.96		
	4	1059	2.69	0.95		
Assurance	1	1395	3.48	0.74	5.421**	.000
	2	1144	3.36	0.79		
	3	966	3.31	0.81		
	4	1059	3.25	0.78		
Empathy	1	1395	3.01	0.82	12.919**	.000
	2	1144	2.94	0.88		
	3	966	2.87	0.88		
	4	1059	2.82	0.86		

**p < .005

As it can be seen in Table 4, the perception of students regarding all service quality dimensions for the SAOD varies depending on the class level at which they study. In other words, as the class level of the student goes up, the quality perception regarding the Tangibles dimension of the SAOD goes down. According to this, **H3a has been supported**. Similarly, as the class level of the student goes up, the quality perception regarding the Reliability dimension of the SAOD goes down. According to this, **H3b has been supported**. As the class level of a student goes up, the quality perception regarding the Responsiveness dimension of the SAOD goes down. According to this, **H3c has also been supported**. Additionally, as the class level of a student goes up, the quality perception regarding the Assurance dimension of the SAOD goes down. According to this, **H3d has been supported**. Finally, as the class level of a student goes up, the quality perception regarding the Empathy dimension of the SAOD goes down. According to this, **H3e has been supported**.

In the H4 hypothesis, it was predicted that the service quality dimensions regarding the SAOD might be perceived variably depending on the frequency of visits to the Student Affairs Office by the student. Results of the ANOVA test performed in order to test this hypothesis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: ANOVA Results for the Service Quality Perception of the SAOD Depending on the Frequency of Visits

Dimensions	Group	N	Average	Ss	F	p
Tangibles	Once a Month	2738	3.01	0.66	14.919**	.000
	Once a Term	1831	3.11	0.65		
	Once a Year	181	3.15	0.66		
Reliability	Once a Month	2738	3.37	0.86	13.259**	.000
	Once a Term	1831	3.49	0.76		
	Once a Year	181	3.35	0.82		
Responsiveness	Once a Month	2738	2.73	0.96	13.559**	.000
	Once a Term	1831	2.87	0.91		
	Once a Year	181	2.88	0.92		
Assurance	Once a Month	2738	3.30	0.81	14.592**	.000
	Once a Term	1831	3.43	0.73		
	Once a Year	181	3.45	0.78		
Empathy	Once a Month	2738	2.88	0.88	6.481**	.002
	Once a Term	1831	2.96	0.83		
	Once a Year	181	3.03	0.86		

**p<0.005

As it can be seen in Table 5, the perception of students regarding all service quality dimensions for the SAOD varies depending on the frequency of visits. Consequently, as a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perception regarding the Tangibles dimension of the SAOD increases. According to this, **H4a has been supported**. However, as a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perception regarding the Reliability dimension of the SAOD initially increases but then decreases. According to this, **H4b has not been supported**. As a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perception regarding the Responsiveness dimension of the SAOD increases. According to this, **H4c has also been supported**. Additionally, as a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perception regarding the Assurance dimension of the SAOD increases. According to this, **H4d has been supported**. Finally, as a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perception regarding the Empathy dimension of the SAOD increases. According to this, **H4e has been supported**.

Lastly, a hypothesis (H5) examining the effects of service quality perception on satisfaction has been performed. With the mentioned hypothesis, it was predicted that the perceived service quality regarding the SAOD might have positive effects on the overall satisfaction regarding the SAOD. In order to test this hypothesis, linear regression analysis was performed where the perceived service quality dimensions (Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Tangibles) were the independent variables and the overall satisfaction regarding the SAOD was the dependent variable. Regression analysis results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Effects of Service Quality Perception of the SAOD on the Overall Satisfaction

	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Model</i>	0.598	1419.11		
<i>(Constant)</i>			0.369	0
<i>Tangibles</i>			0.383	0.000*
<i>Reliability</i>			0.205	0.000*
<i>Responsiveness</i>			0.176	0.000*
<i>Assurance</i>			0.091	0.000*
<i>Empathy</i>			0.212	0.000*

Dependent Variable: SAOD Satisfaction

*P<0,05

Based on the results obtained, it is concluded that the dimension, which affects the overall satisfaction of H.U. students regarding the SAOD, is the *tangibles* dimension. One unit of improvement on the Tangibles dimension among the perceived quality dimensions would increase the overall satisfaction of students by 0.41. Besides, one unit improvement on the Reliability dimension among the perceived quality dimensions would increase the overall satisfaction of the student by 0.20, one unit improvement on the Responsiveness dimension among the perceived quality dimensions would increase the overall satisfaction of the student by 0.18, one unit improvement on the Assurance dimension among the perceived quality dimensions would increase the overall satisfaction of the student by 0.09, and one unit improvement on the Empathy dimension among the perceived quality dimensions would increase the overall satisfaction of the student by 0.21. According to the analyses obtained from the H.U. Student Affairs unit and the results in Table 5, among the perceived service quality dimensions, tangibles affect the overall satisfaction levels regarding the mentioned unit positively (0.408) and significantly (0.000; P<0.05). Accordingly, **H5a has been supported**. Similarly, Reliability (0.205), Responsiveness (0.176), Assurance (0.091), and Empathy (0.212) dimensions affect the overall satisfaction levels regarding the mentioned unit positively and significantly (0.000; P<0.05). Accordingly, **H5b, H5c, H5d and H5e have been supported**. In research articles, findings should be given here and the abovementioned principles should be considered.

4. DISCUSSION and RESULTS

In the study, it has been an aim to determine the satisfaction level of H.U. students regarding the SAOD, evaluate their perceptions regarding the service quality dimensions, take note of which direction the quality perception of students regarding the SAOD varies based on the class levels and frequency of visits, and to examine the relation between these perceptions and the overall satisfaction level of the students regarding the SAOD. According to the findings obtained in this regard, the overall satisfaction levels of H.U. students regarding the SAOD at the Hacettepe University are considerably low. Therefore, other hypotheses of the study have reached a significant status in order to understand the reasons behind the students' low quality level perception. It has been considered that the quality perception of the students regarding the services they receive from the SAOD might be significantly different for each dimension. Consequently, the dimension, which is perceived as of the highest quality, is *Reliability*, defined as the skill to realize the promised service correctly and reliably. This means that even though the students are not satisfied with the overall services by the SAOD, they think that the promised services are provided reliably and timely. This is followed by the *Assurance* dimension, which

explains the courtesy and knowledge of the employees and their skill to evoke trust in the service received by the customers. However, it is determined that the students find the *Tangibles* and *Empathy* dimensions partially of non-quality, and the *Responsiveness* dimension as the lowest quality dimension. In other words, students find the tangible elements such as the physical conditions of the building, modern equipment, software, and number of staff into account regarding the SAOD as being of low quality. Additionally, they find the attributes of the SAOD staff such as understanding the needs and behaving nicely as insufficient. Besides, according to H.U. students, the lowest quality elements of the SAOD are the staff disregarding the complaints, unwillingness to solve the problems, and educational level of students.

The students' perceptions of all SAOD service quality dimensions vary depending on their class levels. As the class level of a student goes up, the quality perceptions regarding Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy dimensions of the SAOD goes down.

According to one of the findings, students' perception for all service quality dimensions varies depending on their frequency of visits. As a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perceptions regarding Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy dimensions of the SAOD increases. However, according to the results obtained, as a student's frequency of visits to the SAOD decreases, the quality perception regarding the Reliability dimension of the SAOD initially increases but then tends to decrease. The reason for why the Reliability dimension has a continuously increasing trend can be argued to be the higher quality perception of the students regarding the Reliability dimension, as a result of the previous analyses.

Lastly, it has been determined that all service quality dimensions as Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy, affect the overall satisfaction level of students positively and significantly. Accordingly, an improvement on the unit and its tasks representing each dimension can increase the satisfaction of students about the SAOD. However, according to the findings, the dimension, which can increase the satisfaction level of the students most, is the *Tangibles* dimension.

When the findings of this study are examined as a whole, an improvement on the physical conditions, modern equipment, software, and number of staff – all regarding the SAOD- can increase the satisfaction levels of students significantly. For this purpose, an additional building for the Student Affairs Office Directorate of H.U. students and the improvement on the buildings and offices associated within can be significant. In addition to these improvements, the development of new software can increase the satisfaction level of a student who is not satisfied with the Tangibles.

In our study, it is concluded that as the class level and visit frequency of the students increase, their satisfaction level with the SAOD decreases. Another meaning of this is, the less the student actually goes to the SAOD, the higher the satisfaction level will be. Because of this, the improvement of software will provide the chance for the student to execute the tasks related to Student Affairs without the need to go to the SAOD physically, and accordingly result in the increment of the overall satisfaction of the student. Besides, an improvement in the building can also increase the satisfaction of the student who has to visit the SAOD physically.

Regarding the SAOD staff, the students evaluate the quality as low, with regards to understanding the needs, smiling behavior, considering the complaints, being willing to solve the problems, and educational level of the staff. The most significant reason for this perception can be interpreted as the heavy workload of the SAOD staff and their encounters with their unexpected workload. Starting from this point of view, providing equal task assignments for the staff by

performing work analyses, increasing the motivation of the staff with on-the-job trainings, and employing additional staff in the SAOD can be the solution to this problem.

In summary, the study has established a relation between the satisfaction of student about the SAOD and the perceived service quality. In this regard, this can be a pioneering study in terms of detecting and improving the insufficiencies of the SAODs within the universities in Turkey. Accordingly, the insufficiencies of the SAOD at H.U. have been determined as explained above and the improvement on the physical conditions of the SAOD building, reinforcement of the software, application of projects to improve the motivation and education of the SAOD staff are suggested to address these insufficiencies. Therefore, the reinforcement of the Student Affairs unit, which is one of the service sources of the university education and the place where the students are met by university life for the first time, can improve the learning process of the student; increase the students' recommendations of their institution to other students, and their satisfaction.

The important constraint of the study is that the students' overall satisfaction of their University and the SAOD are not correlated. In this regard, it can be significant to examine a relation between the satisfaction level of H.U. students of the SAOD and their University in future studies.

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Uzun Özet

Günümüz rekabet ortamında, diğer hizmetlerde olduğu gibi yükseköğrenim görmek isteyen öğrenciler de bir çok seçenek ile karşı karşıya kalmaktadırlar. Bu nedenledir ki, yükseköğrenim kurumları, sadece eğitim kalitesini değil destek hizmetlerinde de öğrencilerin tatmin seviyelerini yükseltmenin yollarını aramaktadırlar. Bu noktadan hareketle günümüzde araştırmacılar, yükseköğrenim kurumları öğrencileri ile güçlü ilişkiler kurmak ve rekabetçi ortamda başarılı olabilmek adına etkili faktörler üzerine çalışmalarda bulunmaktadır. Örneğin, Teo (2001) yaptığı bir çalışmada, “potansiyel müşteri” olarak da adlandırılan öğrencileri tatmin etmek ve böylece üniversitelere kazandırmak için etkili olan faktörleri incelemiştir. Hizmet kalitesinin boyutlarının olumlu algılanması, öğrencilerin tatminini artıran en önemli faktörlerden bir tanesidir (Mahiah, Suhaimi, & Ibrahim, 2006; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). Böylece, öğrencilerin yükseköğretim kurumlarının sunduğu hizmetlere ilişkin değerlendirmelerinin güvenilir bir şekilde ölçülmesi tartışmaların ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Bu tartışmaların sonucunda, pazar odaklı modellerin eğitim sektörüne uyarlanabileceği sonucuna varılmış ve pazar odaklı modellerden biri olan SERVQUAL birçok eğitim hizmetlerinin kalitesini ölçmeye yönelik yapılan çalışmada kullanılmıştır.

Yazında SERVQUAL modelinin eğitim hizmetlerinde kalite algısını ölçmeye uygun olduğu ve çalışmalarda kullanıldığı gözlemlenebilmektedir. Örneğin hizmet kalite algısının işletme okullarında (business schools) (Rigotti and Pitt, 1992) ve yükseköğretim kurumlarında (higher educational institutions) (Cuthbert, 1996; Soutar and McNeil, 1996; Saaditul, Samsinar and Wong, 2000) ölçümünde söz konusu modelin kullanıldığı görülmektedir.

Üniversite eğitimini destekleyen hizmetlerin (öğrenci işleri birimi gibi) kalitesi tüm dünyada son dönemlerde tartışılmaya başlanmış ve pek çok önemli bilimsel tartışmanın da konusu haline gelmiştir. Bu

tartışmaların önemli bir nedeni, üniversite eğitimine destek veren hizmetlere ilişkin kalite algısının; öğrencilerin öğrenme, kurumlarını diğer öğrencilere tavsiye etme ve tatmin gibi davranışları ile ilişkili olmasıdır.

Destek hizmetlerin hizmet kalitesinin artırılması konusunda yapılan birkaç çalışma da (Christmen & Philbrick, 1993; Delene & Bunda, 1991; Edwards, 1993; Seymour, 1992; Sutcliffe & Pollock, 1992) öğrenci işleri yöneticilerine ilişkin incelemeler yapılmaktadır. Ancak, yazında çok az sayıda çalışma (Ruby, 1998) SERVQUAL modelini öğrenci işlerinin verdiği hizmetlerin kalitesinin ölçülmesi adına kullanmıştır. Bu noktada çalışmamız ilgili yabancı yazını genişletmek ve Türkçe yazında ÖİDB'na uygulayan ilk çalışma olarak önemli bir katkı sağlamak amacını taşımaktadır.

Dolayısıyla bu çalışma birincil olarak, üniversite öğrencilerinin Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı'na (ÖİDB) ilişkin hizmet kalite algısını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu algıyı ortaya koymak adına, hizmet kalite algısını ölçmek üzere geliştirilmiş olan SERVQUAL modeli, Öğrenci İşleri Dairesi'nin sunduğu hizmetlere uyarlanılmıştır. Daha sonra çalışma, SERVQUAL ölçeğini referans alarak, Hacettepe Üniversitesi (H.Ü.) öğrencilerinin ÖİDB'na ilişkin kalite algıları ile tatmin düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyecektir. Çalışmanın amacı, H.Ü. öğrencilerinin ÖİDB'na ilişkin olarak genel tatmin düzeylerinin ölçülmesi, bunun yanı sıra öğrencilerin hizmet kalite boyutlarına yönelik algılarını değerlendirmesi, sınıflara göre ve ziyaret sıklıklarına göre öğrencilerin ÖİDB'na ilişkin kalite algılarının ne yönde farklılaştığının saptanması ve bu algılar ile öğrencinin ÖİDB'na ilişkin genel tatmin düzeyi arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir.

Özetle bu çalışmanın amacı aşağıdaki denenceleri test etmektir:

H1: H.Ü. öğrencilerinin, üniversitelerinde bulunan ÖİDB'na ilişkin tatmin düzeyleri yüksektir.

H2: H.Ü. öğrencilerinin, üniversitelerinde bulunan ÖİDB'na ilişkin hizmet kalite boyutlarını algılamaları farklılaşmaktadır.

H3: H.Ü. öğrencilerinin, üniversitelerinde bulunan ÖİDB'na ilişkin olarak hizmet kalite boyutlarından (a) Fiziki Unsurlar, (b) Güvenilirlik, (c) Cevap Verebilme, (d) Güvence ve (e) Empati'nin algılanması, okudukları sınıf derecesine göre farklılaşabilecektir.

H4: H.Ü. öğrencilerinin, üniversitelerinde bulunan ÖİDB'na ilişkin olarak hizmet kalite boyutlarından (a) Fiziki Unsurlar, (b) Güvenilirlik, (c) Cevap Verebilme, (d) Güvence ve (e) Empati'nin algılanması, ziyaret sıklıklarına göre farklılaşabilecektir.

H5: H.Ü. öğrencilerinin, üniversitelerinde bulunan ÖİDB'na ilişkin olarak, ÖİDB'na ilişkin olarak hizmet kalite boyutlarından (a) Fiziki Unsurlar, (b) Güvenilirlik, (c) Cevap Verebilme, (d) Güvence ve (e) Empati'nin algılanması, ÖİDB'ndan tatminini olumlu ve anlamlı bir şekilde etkilemektedir.

Çalışmada, H.Ü. öğrencilerinin ÖİDB'na ilişkin algıladıkları hizmet kalitesini, Fiziki Unsurlar, Güvenilirlik, Cevap Verebilme, Güvence ve Empati olmak üzere beş boyut altında inceleyen ve hizmet sektöründe güvenilir sonuçlar elde edilen SERVQUAL ölçeği ile ölçmek amaçlanmıştır. Bu doğrultuda SERVQUAL ölçeğinin soruları ve genel tatmin sorularından oluşturulan bir anket tüm H.Ü. öğrencisine (30.000) uygulanmıştır. 4836 öğrenciden cevap alınmıştır, buna göre söz konusu örneklemin ana kütleinin yüzde 16,12'lik bir kısmını temsil ettiği saptanmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analiz edilmesinde Frekans Analizi, Anova ve Regresyon testleri kullanılmıştır.

Çalışmada elde edilen bulgulara göre, H.Ü. öğrencilerinin Hacettepe Üniversitesi'nde bulunan ÖİDB'na ilişkin genel tatmin düzeyleri oldukça düşüktür. Bunun yanı sıra, öğrencilerin en kaliteli olarak algıladıkları boyut, söz verilen hizmeti doğru ve güvenilir bir şekilde yerine getirebilme yeteneği olarak tanımlanan *Güvenilirlik* boyutudur. Bunun anlamı, öğrenciler genel olarak ÖİDB'nın sunduğu hizmetlerden tatmin olmasalar da söz verilen hizmetlerin güvenilir olarak ve zamanında yerine getirildiğini düşünmektedirler. Bunu, çalışanların bilgili ve nazik olması ile hizmetten yararlananlarda güven duygusu uyandırabilme becerilerini açıklayan *Güven* boyutu takip etmektedir. Ancak öğrencilerin *Fiziki Unsurlar* ve *Empati* boyutlarını kısmen kalitesiz, *Cevap Verebilme* boyutunu da en kalitesiz boyut olarak algıladıkları saptanmıştır. Başka bir ifade ile öğrenciler ÖİDB'na ilişkin olarak binanın fiziki koşulları, modern ekipmanlar, yazılım ve iş gören sayısı gibi somut unsurları düşük kaliteli bulmaktadır. Ayrıca H.Ü. öğrencisi Öğrenci İşleri personelinin, ihtiyaçları anlaması ve güler yüzlü davranması gibi özelliklerini yetersiz bulmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, H.Ü. öğrencisine göre, ÖİDB'na ilişkin en kalitesiz olarak algılanan

unsurlar, personelin şikâyetleri dikkate almaması, sorunları çözmede hevesli olmaması ve personelin eğitim düzeyidir.

Öğrencilerin ÖİDB'na ilişkin tüm hizmet kalite boyutlarına yönelik algıları, okudukları sınıf düzeyine göre farklılaşmaktadır. Bir öğrencinin okuduğu sınıf düzeyi arttıkça, ÖİDB'ndaki Fiziki Unsurlar, Güvenilirlik, Cevap Verebilme, Güven ve Empati boyutuna ilişkin kalite algıları düşmektedir. Ayrıca, bir öğrencinin ÖİDB'na ziyaret sıklığı azaldıkça, ÖİDB'ndaki Fiziki Unsurlar, Güvenilirlik, Cevap Verebilme, Güven ve Empati boyutlarına ilişkin kalite algıları artmaktadır.

Çalışmada son olarak, algılanan hizmet kalite boyutlarının tümünün, öğrencilerin söz konusu birime ilişkin genel tatmin düzeylerini olumlu ve anlamlı bir şekilde etkilediği bulunmuştur. Buna göre her bir boyutun temsil ettiği birim ve görevlerde yapılacak olan iyileştirme, H.Ü. öğrencilerinin ÖİDB'ndan tatminlerini artırabilecektir. Ancak elde edilen bulgulara göre, öğrencinin tatmin düzeyini en fazla artıracak olan boyut *Fiziki Unsurlar* boyutudur.

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