



CLIENTS' SATISFACTION ON THE FRONTLINE SERVICES OF A GOVERNMENT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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Abstract:

The study assessed the clients' level of satisfaction on the different frontline services provided by government run higher education institution (HEI) external campus in the municipality of Alangalang, Leyte, Philippines. This study is anchored on the Philippine Republic Act Number 9485 which advocates the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 (ARTA) requiring all government institutions to provide programs and services supportive to strengthening customer satisfaction and enhanced services delivery, educate and equip employees assigned in the frontline service to become more responsive and efficient to clients' needs. It employed a descriptive survey research design utilizing both the quantitative and qualitative approaches with a self-structured survey instrument. The study adopted the core areas of the Report Card Survey (RCS) of the ARTA; timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy, fairness and ethical treatment, service quality, physical setup/layout and basic facilities. Majority of the student respondents belonged to the young adult group represented with ages ranging from 18-21 years, while the faculty and staff, alumni and supplier respondents were young adult (18-35 years old) and were mostly females. Findings revealed that, in general, the students, faculty and staff and alumni were very satisfied with the services provided for by the HEI under study. The area on competence got the highest satisfaction rating while the area on basic facilities got the lowest satisfaction. In conclusion, the government HEI managed to deliver good quality services but with gaps and not enough to earn high satisfaction among its clientele. It is recommended that the management should consider the problems observed and should take necessary mechanisms to improve the satisfaction to its clientele.

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1. Introduction

Government establishments are always visited by the citizens to transact businesses and avail services, requests for issuance of documents and other important matters. The government exists for its citizens, to protect and to foster the general welfare and rights of the general public (Pañares and Abocejo, 2019). It works for the benefit of its citizens without any intention to abuse power (Evangelio and Abocejo, 2015) and exploit personal motives. Given the important role of the government, one who is working and compensated by the estate must have the heart for the people (Andaya and Abocejo, 2019), passion to serve and high sense of accountability

Section 4 of the Philippine Republic Act No. 6713 (RA5713) clearly enumerates the standards of personal conduct that all public employees and officials must possess in carrying out services delivery, being committed to public interests, practicing the highest degree of professionalism, objectivity and truthfulness as they serve with fair practice and neutrality. They must be responsive to the public, nationalistic and patriotic, committed to the democratic way of living, and living the modest life possible (Section 4, Republic Act No. 6713) with utmost diligence, responsibility, honesty, loyalty and efficiency at all times (Section 1, Article XI, 1987 Philippine Constitution).

This goal of the government is deeply intensified through the passage into law of the Republic Act No. 9485 also named as the "Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007" (ARTA) whose main goal is to improve the effectiveness and efficacy in delivering government services by way of casting out bureaucratic red tape and the rigid processes that slow down the processing of certain transaction thereby stop graft activities in all government and public institutions. The ARTA requires government agencies and offices with front line services to reengineer their systems and procedures for improvement of service delivery from time to time, and review their procedures to determine whether the number of documents required, signatures required and overall steps required could be reduced (Rule III, Sec1, CSC MC No.12, S. 2008).

The effort of the government in strictly monitoring the compliance on existing laws and regulations to improve frontline services delivery is through to all government institutions including higher education institutions (HEIs) particularly the state universities and colleges (SUCs). Accordingly, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) of the Philippines closely monitor the SUCs as far as service delivery and client satisfaction are concerned since they cater to the general public and the students.

The goal of every institution is to efficiently and effectively serve every client it deals business with (Pamatong and Abocejo, 2017). In this times where raising of complaints and grievances are just a text or call away, and some are making the social media as their way of raising their complaints, many institutions are trying to give the best "transacting experience" to their clients. Martins (2016) noted that today's digital age

increased the impact of customer reviews. What a client perceives can easily be processed in an instant which can be distributed throughout the world for everyone to know. Controversies are always popular and negative experiences of clients can stain an organization's reputation. As a result, organizations today need to learn how to work and deal with their clients.

Aiming for excellence does not only mean being exceptional in instruction, research and extension but also in administrative services. Accordingly, the administrative and support staff play significant roles due to the advancement in communication and information technology with the birth of an 'enterprise culture' within the higher education sphere. Sepitula (2010) stressed that aside from the prime mandate of providing instruction, research and extension to the public, government HEI are indispensable instruments in providing service quality to clients. Mengesha (2015) argued that an accomplishment of any institution relies on the competence of fore employees as they are considered the main characters to build the first and lasting impressions towards an organization's positive image to its clients.

This study endeavoured to extract the real sentiments of the clients as far as frontline service delivery is concerned in the HEI under study. The study findings can provide open avenues for improvement in the way services are delivered by the different offices of the HEI to lessen the complaints from the clients. This is also an impartial way of evaluating the efforts made by the administration in meeting and supplying the demands and needs of its diverse clientele; and more than just supplying the demands is the quality of service being delivered.

This paper argues that assessing the quality and efficacy of the services delivery to clients of a government run HEI open doors for invaluable inputs to effective HEI management. The provision of high quality services translate to effective and efficient accomplishment which bring about client high satisfaction beneficial to both parties concerned. Knowing how the services are delivered and the problems encountered therein can offer practical guide and feedback for the institution to constantly strive for continuous improvement in meeting clients' needs and satisfaction.

1.1 Study Objectives

This study assessed the quality and level of client satisfaction of the frontline services provided by a government higher education institution (HEI) external campus in Alangalang, Leyte, Philippines. Specifically, it determined the level of client satisfaction in the areas of timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy, fairness and ethical treatment, service quality, physical set up and basic facilities. The study also investigated how the different frontline services were provided and delivered to the clientele and what problems were observed and encountered by the clients during transactions with the concerned offices.

2. Review of Literature

Client satisfaction is the goal of every service delivery entity to earn and retain its place in the market. In the marketing perspective, client satisfaction is the extent to which a product or services meet or surpass customers' expectation (Iberahim et al., 2016). To meet clients' satisfaction, institutions initiate client friendly and comprehensive management approaches (Adrutdin et al., 2018). Teshome, Woldeyohans, Haile and Alene (2018) reported that many organizations define client satisfaction based on their market, standard and quality of the product. More importantly, they noted that the importance of the relationship between the client and the product or between the product and the service provider.

As an effort to meet customer satisfaction, every company must strive to provide the best quality products (Pamatong and Abocejo, 2017). When a customer complains, an agency must review the underlying causes for services improvement (Nuridin, 2018). With the goal to eliminate the rising complaints about weak frontline service delivery, the Philippine government put into law the Republic Act Number 9485 or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 (ARTA) on June 2007. The law primarily aims to improve the effectiveness and efficacy in delivering government services to every client and customer by way of casting out bureaucratic red tape and the rigid processes which slow down transaction. Likewise, to stop graft activities in all government agencies and public institutions (Aceron, Cornelio and Crismo, 2015), the ARTA targets to eradicate the excessive rules and regulations which plague the government system.

Since ARTA is designed to drive out inefficiency and improve clientele's satisfaction rating and to boost reliance in government institutions, the CSC is mandated by law to be responsible in evaluating government agencies and offices. The CSC puts all of its efforts towards continuous refinement and improvement of the Report Card Survey (RCS) as a tool to better enhance compliance to the ARTA Law. The RCS is used to assess the perceptions of the public on the quality, efficacy and the sufficiency of the provided services. It is designed to critically evaluate the concerned agency and its employees (Rule II, Section 2, ARTA IRR, 2008). This evaluation tool serves as a mechanism to improve the delivery of services by correcting deficiencies and irregularities in the government.

As part of the reinforcement drive of the government, non-compliance with the ARTA is one of the causes to withhold the release of the Productivity Based Bonus (PBB) of government employees. The SUCs commit to adhere the requirements of ARTA with vision and mission to provide the best service possible to their clients thereby achieved quality service provision at best. Iberahim et al. (2016) defined timeliness as the state or condition of arriving on time or punctual. Usually, clients are in a hurry, they always want their presence to be recognised as soon as they arrive in the office for their concern. They always want to be served right and first above any other things, making timeliness an important indicator for their satisfaction.

Bacal (2005) noted that fast and prompt services are of important concern of customers. They want the serving personnel to make efforts and assist them effectively

and efficiently. Clients also expect that servicing personnel are not creating conditions and excuses which cause the wait longer than appropriate. A frontline staff must make all efforts to facilitate clients' requests the soonest time possible. Ibrahimi et al. (2016) associate timeliness with reliability when they argued that reliability is the ability to always render anticipated standards, how the organization manages any arising problem and deliver what is asked based on the stated time and maintaining accurate records.

Frontline personnel should not only be sufficiently knowledgeable but also comprehend the mission, goals and objectives of the organization and the service quality parameters (Mengesha, 2015). They need to be keen in identifying customers' problems and concerns and bring forth immediate responses and solutions. Martins (2016) stressed that getting service right is not an overnight job. The trainings and learning that a service provider undergoes will help him get better each day (Abocejo, 2015). The key to be always knowledgeable as front liner is to continue being educated on customer service, stay updated with the current trends and never stop learning about the job.

Competence is another criterion for client satisfaction. It is the skilful ability displayed by an employee in handling clients. Competent frontline employees have both technical and behavioural competencies to comprehend and appropriately act on clients' needs. Nwulu and Ateke (2018) emphasized the importance of competent and skilled employees in organizations and business firms. They emphasized that firms and organizations enhance the competence of their frontline employees, regularly update their knowledge and skills for continuous improvement.

In like manner, Harcourt and Ateke (2018) stressed that through competence development, employees can broaden their horizons, acquire new technologies to become more efficient thereby augment their creativity and problem-solving skills. Such improvement empowers and creates a setting whereby employees contribute to the firm's competitiveness and productivity (Inthiyaz, 2017), the company management to address the gaps for better customer service (Mengesha, 2015).

Another dimension of client satisfaction is courtesy. Courtesy shows the willingness of the frontline employee to help the clients with their needs. Courteous frontline employees always portray a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for clients and ensure that employees are capable for timely solutions to any given problem (Martins, 2016). Meanwhile, Bacal (2005) illustrated that courtesy creates an environment for customers that is inviting and using civil language. The use of "please" and "thank you" is deemed important. Courtesy goes with being fair in treating clients. Fairness means equal, proper, indiscriminative way of handling clients. Being in the front line requires fairness to every client from all walks of life.

Wieseke, Geigenmüller and Kraus (2012) emphasized the fact that every service encounter must be characterized with more attention, courtesy, and understanding in order to arrive at a more satisfying outcome. Snow and Yanovitch (2010) explained that through deep understanding customer's emotions, one could clearly comprehend what their needs are and can respond to it appropriately.

Customer service providers or frontline service employees must understand the feelings of their clients and treat them the way they want to be treated when they become clients as well. These frontline employees must have the ability to see and perceive the needs and wants of their clients. Basically, service providers can identify the things needed by clients during their visit but each customer also carries a unique need that the provider must discover (Welsh, 2008).

Service quality, another dimensions of client satisfaction is defined as the value the clients receive after using or enjoying the service delivered. It talks on the kind of output delivered to them. The quality of service earns a big percentage in the basis by which clients can be satisfied. Teshome et al. (2018) defined quality service as the condition where the client's perception of the service and the service itself meets or surpasses their assumptions and the secret to service quality, is to give and deliver what the customer expects. Adhikari and Das (2016) explained that the importance of service quality has been gaining momentum over the years as the improvement in service quality is likely to enhance the degree of client satisfaction. Service quality and client satisfaction proved that service quality determine customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is highly affected by service quality (Koirala and Shrestha, 2018).

Physical set up is seen as another dimension of client satisfaction which talks on the physical layout and appearance of the office or service area. It pertains to the strategic location and arrangement of the office that can invite an appealing and sense of security on the part of the transacting public. Makarand, Mohamed, Aziz, and Kumar (2018) elaborated that during service encounter there is really a direct contact that exist between the client and the provider, and with this, it is important that the prevailing ambiance within the organization could provide the needs and choices of both parties; the client and the provider.

Makarand et al. (2018) further noted that another effective way by which the organization could communicate to its clients is putting or making visible signs, symbols and artifacts in walls or along corridors. These signage are considered one of the clearest conveyors of message which include identification cards, department labels (Andaya and Abocejo, 2019), name plates, wall signs like no smoking, exit and emergency plans, danger zone, silence, no to fixers among others. Snow and Yanovitch (2010) enunciated that the institution's physical attributes and layout; from the smallest to the largest detail could already tell the brand or service it carries. Physical security entails diligent and cautious planning in order to protect the interests and assets of the organization (Hutter, 2016).

Service organizations must consider other basic amenities that clients would likely need during and while waiting for their requests to be served. Reading materials and even snacks or candies and providing drinking water must be readily available for the clients. Comfort rooms must bring comfort and not dismay, and express lanes for persons with disability (PWD), the elderly, (Alvarez, Ong and Abocejo, 2017; Inabangan, Garcia and Abocejo, 2019), pregnant women (Abocejo et al., 2012), and senior citizens must be provided to bring convenience to this type of clients. Student needs and queries can now

be processed and be delivered to them in an easy, hassle-free way using programs and systems managed by technical people (Arnold, 2018).

Llanera (2016) stressed that because of the prevailing globalized competition, there is the dire need to continuously improve service quality and satisfaction in order to win client (i.e. students) preferences and maintaining sustainable competitive advantages (Pamatong and Abocejo, 2017). Educational systems now become services for people especially for quality, satisfaction, and performance (Trazo and Abocejo, 2019) that are proven to have a reciprocal connection which means that higher service quality results to more satisfied customers. Adrutdin et al. (2018) stressed that client satisfaction in the different student services is highly connected to the changing and increasing demands of the students and their ideas over the worth of services rendered. Students' activities need the support of the different related student services (Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018), as such there is need to utilize the student services can never be avoided.

Given that HEIs' major clients are students, it must focus on identifying their needs (Jolejole-Caube, Dumlao and Abocejo, 2019) and seek for measures by which they can efficiently and effectively deliver what their students demand from their services. Undeniably, high satisfaction levels will not just improve the retention of students but could also attract new students and would open collaborative networks for graduates (Cuñado and Abocejo, 2018) with potentials who are highly instrumental in improving the reputation of the institution and its position in the market (Paricio, 2017).

Teshome et al. (2018) revealed that overall satisfaction of students on teaching and learning process, Library service, Registrar, General Services and Student Services of the college showed grand mean range from 42.1 to 55.8 percent, which indicated that many customers were dissatisfied on the services coming from the mentioned departments of the college. Timeliness, accuracy, accessibility, cleanliness and availability of the school's facilities were the key indicators in assessing client satisfaction.

Theresia and Bangun (2017) reported that student clients are particular with the physical and reliability dimensions. The quality of their services, physical structure, internet connections and library amenities must also be improved. While Koirala and Shrestha (2018) investigated the causal association among service quality dimensions; service quality and client satisfaction and discovered that the level of service quality has a positive effect on client satisfaction.

Watjatrakul (2014) stipulated that the student-as-customer concept revealed three practical implications. The findings of the study revealed that universities should intensify their efforts in refining the quality of their services for it is the only positive reason why students agree to accept the student-as-customer concept that results in a positive intent to study at a university.

Wieseke et al. (2012) provided practical implications for the role of customer empathy on satisfaction. They noted that customer empathy is one of the factors which explain the strength of the relationship between frontline employee empathy and client satisfaction. Mossop (2016) affirmed that in order to sustain client satisfaction, customer focus must be in high maintenance and in constant vigilance. The factors that can boost

the level client satisfaction are the experienced and conversant staff, friendly and accommodating employees, fast and better service quality (Saravanan, 2018).

Krishnamoorthy, Aishwaryadevi, and Bharathi (2016) revealed that non-teaching personnel's kindness and academic staff individual attention were positively related with students' satisfaction. In higher education, students greatly consider the teaching curriculum (Trazo and Abocejo, 2019), competency of the staffs (Abocejo and Padua, 2010), academic aspect (Fernandez and Abocejo, 2014) and the teaching approaches are the most important factors. While Yusoff, Mc Leay, and Burto (2015) recommended that physical setup and layout and structure fee were the prime causes of student's satisfaction. Hanaysha and Kumar (2012) established that service quality and satisfaction has a significant correlation.

2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Republic Act No. 9485 also named as the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 (ARTA). It is a law which main goal is to improve the effectiveness and efficacy in delivering government services to the people by way of casting out bureaucratic red tape and the rigid processes that slow down the processing of certain transaction, and also to stop graft activities in all government and public institutions. This was put into law on June 2, 2007 (Paragraph 1, MC No. 12, Series of 2008, IRR).

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), advocated by Oliver (as cited in Park and Hwang, 2010) has been predominantly used to explain satisfaction of citizens in the public sector. Based on this theory, one reason for this dissimilarity and variation in the satisfaction levels is the difference in the degree of expectations (Park and Hwang, 2010). One who anticipated more of something may contemplate that what he has is inadequate; while someone who has less presumptions may accept that what he has is already enough (Park and Hwang, 2010). They noted that there are three kinds of expectation: predictive expectation refers to what a person anticipates to happen based on prior experience, normative expectation refers to what a person thinks should happen, and ideal expectation refers to what a person wants to happen.

Grimmelikhuijsen and Porumbescu (2017) revealed that expectancy disconfirmation model claims that client satisfaction is not the ultimate product of the government's goal to improve service performance but is just also dependent on the unpronounced previous performances of a particular service. For example, if the observed service performance absolutely surpassed former assumptions of the service this results to a positive disconfirmation which will eventually lead to more satisfied clients.

The Service Quality Theory is introduced by Oliver (as cited by Anjalika and Priyanath, 2018) argues that when a service provider fails to deliver based on the clients' standards, clients will rate the provider as 'low quality', and if the provider delivers the service as expected or beyond the expectation, clients will rate it as 'high quality'. Mamo (2018) explained that customer satisfaction is basically based on what the clients have gone through during the transaction that is why service quality is a strong element of

satisfaction because the quality or state of the service determines the kind of output the provider was able to deliver to the clients.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual flow of the study where improved service quality and client satisfaction are the dependent variables and are affected by the independent variables which include the service areas/dimensions (timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy, fairness and ethical treatment, service quality, physical set up, and basic facilities). Problems met by the clients are also dependent on the service areas/dimensions mentioned. The line from the independent variables (service areas) to the dependent variable (client satisfaction) denotes that the service areas may or may not affect the quality of services and level of client satisfaction.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Client satisfaction and their problems met were considered as the dependent variables influenced by the core area variables: namely; timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy, fairness and ethical treatment, quality, physical set up and basic facilities. The quantitative approach sought to answer the “what” of the study. The qualitative approach endeavoured to explain how the different frontline services are delivered to the clients.

3.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in a higher education institution (HEI) which is a satellite campus of a state run University. The HEI offers University level degree programmes: namely; Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA), Diploma in Agricultural Technology, Bachelor of Agricultural Technology (BAT), Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd),

Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd), Bachelor of Environmental Management (BSEM).

At the time of the study, the HEI has 59 faculty members; 18 of them or 30.50 percent were regular permanent, 22 or 37.38 percent were regular temporary and 19 or 32.20 percent were part time lecturers. Meanwhile, the HEI has 14 administrative staff; 13 of them are permanent in status and 1 casual employee.

3.3 Research Respondents and Sampling Technique

The research respondents were students, alumni, faculty and staff, and supplier. Fifty (50) respondents per frontline office (Accounting, Cashier, Registrar's, Clinic, Library and College Student Services Affairs) were able to participate the survey using the accidental sampling technique.

Accidental or convenience sampling was used in the study (Mamo, 2018) as the researchers considered only those were available during the actual conduct of the study. Based on the accidental sampling, 236 students transacted business with the various offices of the HEI, agreed to be interviewed and took part as survey respondents. In addition, there were 39 alumni, 26 faculty and staff and 1 supplier.

The 236 student responders came from the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (11), Diploma in Agricultural Technology (18), Bachelor in Secondary Education (36), Bachelor in Environmental Science (49), Bachelor in Agricultural Technology (55), and Bachelor in Elementary Education (67).

3.4 Research Instrument

A self-structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection in the study adopting the core areas of the RCS; timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy, fairness and ethical treatment, quality, physical set up and basic facilities with the same goal which is to assess the level of client satisfaction on the services delivered by the different frontline offices of the HEI under survey.

The questionnaire consisted of five parts: Part 1, sought to identify the general background of the client respondent which includes their demographic profile; age, sex, educational attainment, and the type of client where they belong. Part 2, tackled the service evaluation. The list of services provided by a particular office is given and the respondent identifies the service(s) he/she had availed by way of putting a check mark on the space provided before each service. After which, the respondent evaluated the service(s) availed and answer in narrative form how services were delivered and provided.

Part 3 was comprised of 80-item indicators; equally distributed – 10 items per service criteria this time evaluating the level of client satisfaction. Each indicator was evaluated using a 5-point scale (5 – Extremely Satisfied, 4 – Very Satisfied, 3 – Moderately Satisfied, 2 – Slightly Satisfied, and 1 – Not Satisfied).

Part 4 of the questionnaire looked into the problems met or encountered by the client during his/her transaction. The list of possible problems was given and the client

identified it by way of drawing a check mark before each item. This could be on a multiple entries.

Lastly, Part 5, solicited suggestions and feedbacks from the clients towards improvement on the quality of service delivery of the HEI.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The voluntary participation of the clients was observed during the entire data gathering procedure. Clients who visited the offices for their concerns were asked first if they can and is willing to answer the survey questionnaire. Verbal consent was asked first and they were informed of their right to withdraw from answering the questionnaire if they felt uneasy. The study purposes were clearly explained to the clients before distributing the instrument. Identity of the clients were withheld with confidentiality and they were given the option whether to state or not to state their names in the questionnaire. A formal letter was also written before the questions proper with the goal of assuring the clients that any information divulge and ratings will be dealt with utmost confidentiality and would only be used for the purpose of the study.

3.6 Validation of Instrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire made by the researcher was subjected to content validation by knowledgeable persons in management, language, questionnaire preparation, and analysis and interpretation of data. The suggestions and recommendations of the experts were consolidated to come with a final questionnaire before it was pre-tested. The said questionnaire was pilot tested in another HEI with 60 respondents. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the items in the instrument which registered an excellent reliability coefficient of 0.956. The result suggested that the 80-item indicators were included in the final run of the instrument.

3.7 Data Gathering Procedures

Following the protocol, formal permission was asked from the head of the HEI where the pilot test was to be conducted. Upon approval, the pilot test was implemented test the reliability of the research instrument. Sixty (60) respondents were able to accomplish the survey during the pilot test. Another formal permission was asked from the Dean of the HEI before the conduct of the actual survey. In the actual data gathering, a recognised constrained was to get clients transacting business at the office and were available to answer the survey which started November to December 2018.

The researchers administered questionnaires to sample respondents of the different offices and retrieved them after being answered by the clients. The schedules of the data gathering were 3 days per week, 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon on a rotational basis, from one office to the other of the HEI under study. Gathered data were encoded through Microsoft Excel and were processed using the Minitab software.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

The client respondents were categorized as students, alumni, faculty and staff, supplier. Out of the 234 student responders, 131 or 56 percent belong to the young adult 58 or 25 percent were adults, 35 or 15 percent were young mature, 6 or 2 percent were mature and 4 or 2 percent also were old mature. On the other hand, out of 66 faculty and staff, alumni and supplier respondents, 56 or 85 percent were considered young adult, 9 or 14 percent were middle aged adult and one older adult. There were more female respondents than their male counterparts at 67 percent and 33 percent, respectively. This figure tells that female clients were more participative to answer the survey than the male for reasons that males have no time to answer the survey; they were reluctant and were not open to share their thoughts and ideas about the survey. This finding has a nearer similarity with the findings of the study of Teshome et al. (2018) where male respondents only comprised 36.9 percent of the total number of respondents compared to female with 63.1 percent.

The largest group of 236 respondents, accounting 79 percent, attained university level of education. While, 19 percent or 58 respondents were university graduate. Only two percent or 6 respondents were in their master's level of education. The 236 student respondents (college level) were determined as to their courses and year level. Eleven out of 236 were enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA), 18 were Diploma in Agricultural Technology, 36 were from the Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSED), while 49 were coming from the Bachelor of Science in Environmental Management, 55 from Bachelor of Agricultural Technology (BAT) and the 67 came from the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED). The result denotes that majority of the student clients were coming from the BEED program since this is the course with the highest number of students enrolled, while the lowest number of student clients came from the BSA program because it is a newly opened program this semester with the lowest number of student population.

Also one reason that can be implied as per observation, BEED students are more dominating than the rest of the enrollees in other degree programs. These students are more participative and active in anyway especially in expressing their ideas and thoughts and they were the most frequent clients visiting these offices during the conduct of this study.

The HEI under study caters not just students but other clients such as alumni, faculty/staff, parents and other clienteles as may be specified. At the time of the study, the researcher was able to gather 236 student respondents or 78 percent of the total number of respondents, and is considered as the majority, 39 alumni or 13 percent, 26 faculty/staff responders or 9 percent and one supplier. These data obviously tell that since the study was conducted in a university, students were the primary clienteles, next to it were the faculty and staff who have also important and various functions to deal with these offices.

4.2 Clients Level of Satisfaction

Table 1 presents the clients' level of satisfaction on the frontline services provided by the different offices of the HEI under study along with the service areas; timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy and extra mile, fairness and ethical treatment, service quality, physical set up, and basic facilities.

Table 1: Clients' Level of Satisfaction

Areas/Dimension	Mean	SD	Description
Accounting Office	3.60	0.33	Very Satisfied
Cashiering Section	3.66	0.11	Very Satisfied
College Student Services Affairs Office	3.60	0.07	Very Satisfied
School Clinic	3.85	0.11	Very Satisfied
School Library	3.45	0.11	Very Satisfied
Registrar's Office	3.64	0.06	Very Satisfied
Grand weighted mean	3.63		Very Satisfied
Overall SD		0.15	

4.2.1 Accounting Services

The finding reveals the overall level of client satisfaction on the services provided by the Accounting Office (AO) along the eight areas or service dimensions. Clients were very satisfied (weighted mean = 3.60) with the way the AO delivered its services to the HEI clientele. They found people at the AO very competent. This result implies the ability of the accounting frontline people to handle clients' needs and queries. They are efficient in resolving problems and queries clearly indicating that competence effect client satisfaction. Competent frontline employees possess both technical capabilities and behavioural competencies that will enable them to comprehend and respond to clients' needs accurately, timely and rightfully (Mengesha, 2015).

On the other hand, among the eight rated dimensions, clients were just moderately satisfied on service quality (weighted mean =3.38) and basic facilities (3.22). These results suggest that due to the manual processing of students' assessments and posting of payments on their respective ledgers, there is a higher chance for mistakes and sometimes giving incorrect figures of payables and balances to the students. Also, some payments made by the students were not accordingly posted. In addition, the manual process causes clients to wait longer for their turn to be served. When it comes to basic facilities, the office's space intended for waiting clients need to be improved by way of providing more seats and have it ventilated most especially during enrolment and paying season where the bulk of transactions occur. Moreover, the office needs to provide ramps to make it accessible to clients with disabilities.

4.2.2 Cashiering Services

The clients' level of satisfaction with the Cashiering Services was almost close to similar with the result of the Accounting Office as it yielded a grand mean of 3.66 (Very Satisfied). The areas on competence (4.06), courtesy (3.90), knowledge (3.75), fairness and ethical

treatment (3.70), timeliness (3.59) and physical set up (3.58) got the very satisfied ratings from the clients. While the areas on basic facilities and service quality got the moderately satisfied ratings; 3.37 and 3.34, respectively.

This implies that clients are really particular when it comes to the quality of the output(s) or service(s) they received from their provider. They may be satisfied when it comes to prompt attention given to them, on the knowledge and competence displayed by the frontline staff, or the courtesy and kind attitude shown to them, but the final output which can tell the quality of the service has the last say whether clients would really be satisfied or not. The kind of output delivered and how it meets the expectations of the clients also determine their satisfaction. Due to the manual issuance of official receipts, mistakes are inevitable and normally take time. Also, the aspects on facilities and equipment have an effect on satisfaction. These findings were comparable to the study of Theresia and Bangun (2017) on customer satisfaction in a university at Indonesia when the results of their studies stated that students are more concerned on the tangibility aspects which are related to buildings, comfort and cleanliness, physical infrastructures, internet and other facilities that are helpful in the fast delivery of services to the students.

The clients were moderately satisfied about the HEI basic facilities when they expect better amenities like comfort rooms, waiting areas, express lanes for differently-abled persons and even internet among others. The cashiering section needs to provide a system that will ease in the issuance of official receipts and will minimize mistakes because the manual issuance of OR causes delays and is time-consuming. The provision of comfortable seats for waiting and paying clients need to be given priority for it was seen as one important factor why the office got a moderately satisfied rating on this area.

4.2.3 College Student Services Affairs (CSSA)

There was no really big difference on the clients' level of satisfaction with the CSSA services from that of the Accounting and Cashiering offices since the grand mean for CSSA landed at 3.60 very satisfied. The areas on competence, courtesy, and knowledge has been very consistent in its ranks as top 3 from Accounting Office until CSSA, this time having mean scores of 3.93, 3.85, and 3.72, respectively; followed by the area on fairness and ethical treatment (3.60), physical set up (3.52), timeliness (3.48), service quality (3.47) as Very Satisfied and basic facilities (3.23) Moderately Satisfied.

One cause that could be inferred for having a moderately satisfied rating on the area of basic facilities was based on the clamour of the respondents that the office should provide a spacious and well-ventilated waiting area that would bring comfort to them while waiting and the provision of students' lounge. The office needs to be relocated in a more accessible place in the university and should provide ramps being a public building that look into the welfare and convenience of the transacting person with disabilities.

4.2.4 Clinic Services

Clients were Very Satisfied with the services provided by the clinic as it earned a grand mean of 3.85. The area on competence got the highest satisfaction level as it earned a mean of 4.16, followed by the areas on courtesy (4.09), knowledge (4.08), fairness and ethical treatment (3.85), physical setup (3.74), timeliness (3.70), basic facilities (3.66), and service quality (3.49) all were described as Very Satisfied.

Results showed that clients are satisfied in the competence and capabilities of the person manning the clinic being a registered and experienced nurse. Majority of the clinic responders are satisfied the way they are handled and taken care of in terms of their medical needs and concerns. Even if the results showed that they are satisfied there are still those who look forward for a better service. Most of the responses suggested that the clinic must be equipped with the modern medical facilities that are really needed to better serve the clients. Also, clients suggested that aside from the school nurse, there must be another equally knowledgeable person in the field that would take charge in the absence of the other personnel so as to timely address the clients' concerns and needs especially in times of emergency.

4.2.5 Library Services

Clients were very satisfied with the services provided by the Library having a grand mean of 3.45. Same with the clinic, the area on competence got the highest satisfaction rating among the eight areas having a mean score of 3.63. The area on fairness and ethical treatment follows with a mean of 3.52, courtesy 3.50, knowledge 3.49, and physical set up 3.48 all ratings described as Very Satisfied; while the areas on timeliness, basic facilities, and service quality were rated as Moderately satisfied having mean scores of 3.36, 3.30 and 3.28, respectively.

The result shows that basic facilities of the library such as computers with fast internet connections, updated and latest editions of books and reference materials, comfortable seats, comfort rooms and the physical arrangement of books, and the prompt attention given to the clients are contributors to clients' satisfaction; thus the reason why the mentioned areas got the moderately satisfied ratings. As emphasized by the respondents in their survey questionnaires, majority of them are aiming for a huge improvement especially in the library holdings and the facilities that an ideal library should and can provide.

To better serve and satisfy their clients, the library has to provide up-to-date reference materials and books most especially those that are needed by the students. Given the bulk of students that need the services of the library, it needs to provide additional manpower for fast and prompt delivery of services. Service quality also earned the moderately satisfied rating because for the clients, since the library fail to provide them the kind of references they need, the quality of service it provides to its clientele is also affected.

4.2.6 Registrar's Office

Clients of the Registrar's office were very satisfied with the services provided to them (weighted mean = 3.64). Still, the area on competence among the eight areas got the highest satisfaction rating with mean 3.92 (Very satisfied). The areas on courtesy (3.80), knowledge (3.75), physical setup (3.68), fairness and ethical treatment (3.66), timeliness (3.51) and service quality (3.41) were also described as very satisfied while the area on basic facilities was described as moderately satisfied with a weighted mean of 3.39. It can be inferred that the moderate satisfactory rating comes with the office still doing the manual way of safekeeping and entering of grades and producing certifications and students' credentials which often cause erroneous inputs of grades.

Clients reiterated the importance of having a computerized system that would facilitate a fast and error-free transaction thereby minimize the waste of resources, a system that will enable students to access their grades online just by registering their student numbers. Anjalika and Priyanath (2018) found out that client satisfaction for both private and public banks are highly dependent on the use of modern facilities and technological services which facilitate quality services delivery.

In general, the clients are very satisfied on the area of competence but are moderately satisfied on the areas of basic facilities and service quality depicting a clearer picture that the provision of basic facilities need to be given a priority as it could easily affect the quality of services and client satisfaction.

4.3 Provisions of Frontline Services to HEI Clients

Notwithstanding efforts exerted by the government HEI, the need to deliver the best services for its clientele is still noticeable with gaps observed by the clients during their transactions with the academic institution. Time-consuming steps, manual transactions, incorrect input of grades, the non-compliance of the "No Noon Break policy" (in some offices), undermanned work force, lack of research references, and slow service delivery – are the common complaints of the students. Responses to these complaints are still working in progress but the veracity still remains that the management has shortcomings, at some point, in meeting the demands of its clients.

4.3.1 Accounting Office

The clients of the Accounting Office (AO) confirmed to have been served with diligence and professionalism. The accounting staff can resolve and provide concrete solutions to students' concerns and inquiries. The clients however noted that given the nature of the accounting works, which are said to be meticulous and need thorough scrutiny, some of their concerns (ex. processing of claims for part time faculty members and job order employees) were not given prompt attention especially if the accounting people have urgent reports to submit. While some clients reiterated that accounting staff were very serious in their works, sometimes they forget to smile and project a friendly aura to the clients.

During enrolment and paying period, when students secure their assessment and admission slips, some clients were disgusted because of the long waiting time just for them to be served knowing that only one staff is catering their assessment and admission slip requests. The clients also reiterated that ramps must be provided especially for persons with disabilities who transact business with the office and to provide a wider waiting area where clients could feel comfortable while waiting for their turn. In general, clients pronounced that the accounting office have met and deliver their needs as expected.

4.3.2 Cashiering Section

Based on the clients' responses, the cashiering services delivery was good. The cashier staff was accommodating and positively responds to clients' queries and concerns. The issuance of official receipts (OR) was still manual and sometimes causes errors and cancellations of ORs. Because of this manual process and only one staff attending to paying clients, it took clients to wait longer especially during peak collection period and during issuances of checks for scholarship grants of the students.

The clients suggested for the HEI to provide a computerised issuance ORs just like other universities to minimise their waiting time and evade occurrence of errors. Same with the Accounting office, the respondents reiterated that the cashiering's waiting area needs to be client-friendly. Another thing that caught the attention of the clientele was on the inconvenient cashier's window which, according to them, must be replaced with glass and not jalousies which is more ideal for a cashier's counter.

4.3.3 College Student Services Affairs (CSSA) Office

Clients have mixed responses regarding their experiences with the CSSA Office. Some of the clients who were asked about the way services were delivered by this office said they were contented on how services were delivered; the staff was accommodating and approachable and was very willing to help resolve clients' concerns. But on the other hand, majority of the clients affirmed that the staff needs to be more accommodating and gentle to clients and avoid scolding them whenever clients commit mistakes along the process. Other clients voiced out that staff must treat all clients with fairness and equality (first come, first serve basis). Clienteles also emphasized the need to provide additional manpower who can assist the students and cater to their concerns most especially during enrolment time.

In terms of facilities where almost all offices in the college lack, the CSSA need to provide a spacious waiting area where seats are available. One client commented that the present location of the office is not accessible and is not easy to locate especially to new people in the college, therefore he suggested having it relocated to a more accessible location.

4.3.4 School Clinic

Clients revealed their experiences on the services provided by the school clinic. They noted that the school nurse was accurate in giving prescriptions for treatment of their ailments. They experience individual attention especially on health counselling and whenever they seek advises pertaining to their health. The clients felt the sincerity and willingness of the school nurse to help them with their medical concerns especially to those clients (student patients) suffering and undergoing treatment like tuberculosis and hepatitis. They also affirmed that whenever they go to the clinic, they were promptly attended and accommodated, the the staff are approachable and friendly.

On the other hand, since the school clinic is only manned by one staff, the school nurse alone, and no one assist her and nobody can take her place when is is absent. Some clients strongly suggest that the HEI hire an equally expert health personnel, a medical doctor or a medical assistant who can cater clients' concerns when the school nurse is not around. Since the HEI clinic is undermanned, clients also noted that this causes them to wait a little longer sometimes especially if there are many patients visiting the clinic. Clients also suggested that the clinic should be equipped with the needed facilities and equipment for more efficient services delivery.

4.3.5 School Library

Responses from the library clients also revealed mixed answers. Some of the clients claimed that they are satisfied of the provided services with the quality of library holdings as the point of evaluation. The clients stressed the need to provide computers with fast internet connections to facilitate their researches online. As to library rules, they highlighted that the library should be strict in imposing library rules like observing and maintaining silence inside the library and the library personnel on duty should reprimand students who go inside just to nap or make noise. They also clamoured that the physical arrangement and setup of the library must be improved to be conducive to learning.

4.3.6 Registrar's Office

When asked how services of the Registrar's office were delivered, clients have various responses. Clients have different experiences during their contact with the office. Other clients have said that they can see that the process was organized but still needs to be enhanced to avoid any inconvenience. But it can also be noted that majority of the responders have reiterated the need for a faster and accurate service delivery most especially in acquiring their credentials and other certifications like the certificate of grades.

Another concern was the manual inputting of grades which causes errors and the tendency was they are receiving certificate of grades that bears incorrect grades. They suggested that the college should provide a system that will help them access their individual grades using their student's number, for them to track and see their deficiencies if there are. Clients also see the need to provide additional manpower most

especially they are doing the manual process and during enrolment period when there is a large bulk of clients to be catered.

On the other hand, some of the clienteles suggested that registrar's staff need to be more approachable and must display a sense of willingness to really help them with their concerns and not be irritated when they request for urgent release of their documents. Also clients have pronounced the need to provide a spacious waiting area where they can conveniently wait while their requests are being processed.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the students, faculty, staff and alumni were very satisfied about the quality of frontline services delivery of the HEI under study. As clients, they were very satisfied with the competence manifested in the provided services in all offices of the HEI. Arguably, competence can substantially influenced the satisfaction of the clienteles. Services provided to clients in the areas on basic facilities exhibited lowest satisfaction rating across offices. Also, the study established that the core areas of RCS of the ARTA - timeliness, knowledge, competence, courtesy, fairness and ethical treatment, service quality, physical setup and basic facilities have been very useful in assessing the quality of services delivered by these offices and in measuring the level of clients' satisfaction.

The researchers recommends that the HEI intensify its effort in addressing the service delivery gap especially on the areas of basic facilities and service quality since these two got the lowest satisfaction ratings with clienteles being only moderately satisfied. The provision of comfortable waiting areas, comfort rooms accessible to clients, ramps and express lanes for differently-abled and pregnant clients have to be provided. The management should pay attention to the complaints and problems noted by the clients in order to achieve total client satisfaction. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that related studies may be conducted exploring the association among age, sex, educational attainment and the level of satisfaction in areas stipulated in the Report Card Survey of ARTA.

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