



The Influence of Academic Service Quality and Satisfaction on Student Word of Mouth at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine the effect of academic service quality and student satisfaction on word of mouth among students at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta. The sample consisted of 105 students, selected using purposive sampling. Primary data collection utilized a closed-ended questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. Path analysis and linear regression models were employed to test the three research hypotheses. The results of the testing proved that, both partially and simultaneously, the variables of academic service quality and student satisfaction have a significant positive influence on student word of mouth. The simultaneous model produced a coefficient of determination of 52.80%, indicating that academic service quality and student satisfaction are quite dominant in determining the variance of changes in the word-of-mouth variable. Meanwhile, 47.20% is influenced by other factors outside the research model.

KEY WORDS: Academic Service Quality, Path Analysis, Student Satisfaction, Word of Mouth.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, universities in Indonesia are facing a major challenge to maintain their existence amid increasingly fierce competition, both locally, nationally, and globally. One important indicator of a university's success is its ability to attract and retain students. In this context, the quality of academic services is a strategic factor that is very decisive. Students not only demand formal education but also place high expectations on excellent academic services, including the provision of qualified faculty, easy access to academic information, efficient administration, and support for learning technologies.

The quality of academic services reflects the extent to which an institution can meet student expectations in various aspects of services that support the teaching and learning process. According to Gruber et al. (2020), the quality of services perceived by students will influence their perception of the institution. If the perception is positive, students tend to feel satisfied with their experience during the educational process.

Student satisfaction is an important variable that represents students' effective and cognitive evaluations of the service experience they receive. When students are satisfied, they will show loyalty, active involvement, and even become voluntary promoters through Word of Mouth (WOM). WOM is a form of informal interpersonal communication that significantly influences the formation of an institution's image and reputation (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Positive WOM has great potential in attracting new students because it is perceived as more credible than formal institutional promotions.

Previous research has shown that service quality contributes to student satisfaction (Ali et al., 2021; Baber, 2021). Additionally, student satisfaction has been proven to encourage positive WOM behavior (Helgesen & Nettet, 2023). However, in many cases, not all students who receive high-quality services will automatically spread WOM. This means that student satisfaction can be mediating or reinforcing variable in the relationship between academic service quality and WOM (Tahir et al., 2021).

Theoretically, the relationship between these variables can be explained through the Service-Profit Chain and Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model approaches. These models state that service quality (stimulus) affects customer satisfaction (organism), which ultimately results in behaviors such as WOM (response) (Ladhari, 2021).

In the context of higher education in Indonesia, it is important to conduct empirical studies that simultaneously examine the influence of academic service quality and student satisfaction on student WOM. This study is expected to contribute scientifically to the development of higher education management literature, as well as provide a basis for formulating strategies to improve institutional



competitiveness through a service-based approach and student experience. Furthermore, this study will be conducted and will take the population and sample of student respondents at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta. This study is considered important, and its findings are expected to contribute to narrowing the gap in similar research that has been conducted by other researchers previously. As stated by Parker, C., & Zeithaml, V. A. (2011), their research identified the importance of service quality as a competitive differentiator but did not develop a deeper relationship between the two types of services and student WOM. The findings of McCole, P. (2004), which highlight the relationship between service and WOM in the business sector, but do not sufficiently focus on the specific influence of educational service quality on student WOM. Similarly, the findings of Tinto, V. (2017), which examine the role of teaching quality in student satisfaction but have not directly linked the two categories of service quality to student WOM.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

Academic Service Quality. Academic service quality is students' perception of how well higher education institutions provide services that support their academic activities. The dimensions of academic service quality in the context of education adopt the SERVQUAL model, which consists of five main dimensions: tangibles (physical evidence), reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In a university setting, these services include interactions with faculty members, access to academic information, academic management systems, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure (Gruber et al., 2020). Research conducted by Ali et al. (2021) shows that positive perceptions of academic services increase student trust and loyalty. Meanwhile, Baber's (2021) research confirms that service quality has a direct influence on student satisfaction.

Student Satisfaction. Student satisfaction can be defined as the degree of alignment between their expectations and the reality they experience in terms of academic experiences and campus services (Kotler & Fox, 2022). Satisfaction serves as a crucial indicator in evaluating the quality of higher education institutions, as it directly correlates with student retention, loyalty, and promotional behaviors such as word-of-mouth recommendations (Helgesen & Nettet, 2023).

Satisfaction emerges as an affective reaction to the services provided by the institution. The disconfirmation theory model explains that when service experiences exceed expectations, satisfaction will increase (Oliver, 1980). In this context, the quality of academic services is the main predictor of student satisfaction (Bakar et al., 2022; Letcher & Neves, 2022).

Word of Mouth (WOM). WOM is a form of interpersonal communication in which information about products, services, or organizations is voluntarily disseminated between individuals (Harrison-Walker, 2001). In higher education, WOM occurs when students recommend institutions to prospective students, either directly or through social media (Brown & Mazzarol, 2021). Positive WOM is a strategic asset for institutions because it has a significant impact on reputation and prospective students' decisions (Helgesen & Nettet, 2023).

Research by Prentice (2021) and Hossain (2021) shows that service quality and student satisfaction have a significant effect on WOM behavior. This means that students who are satisfied and have good service experience are more likely to share that positive experience.

The Relationship Between Academic Service Quality and Student Satisfaction

Academic service quality is students' perception of the quality of services received in the learning process and academic support, including interactions with lecturers, speed of service, facilities, and clarity of information (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Gruber et al., 2020). When service quality meets or exceeds expectations, students will feel satisfied.

Student satisfaction is an emotional response that arises because of evaluating their academic experiences. Oliver (1980) through the disconfirmation theory states that satisfaction occurs when expectations are met or exceeded. Many studies support the positive relationship between service quality and student satisfaction (Ali et al., 2021; Baber, 2021; Helgesen & Nettet, 2023). Therefore, the higher the students' perception of service quality, the greater their level of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1: *Academic service quality has a positive influence on student satisfaction.*

The Relationship Between Academic Service Quality and Student Word of Mouth

In addition to influencing satisfaction, academic service quality also has a direct impact on word-of-mouth behavior. Students who receive high-quality services tend to share their positive experiences with prospective students or external parties (Harrison-Walker,

2001). WOM in the context of education includes recommendations, testimonials on social media, and informal conversations about academic experiences.

Research by Prentice (2021) and Rojas-Méndez (2021) shows that service quality significantly contributes to students' intentions to engage in WOM. Services that are fast, friendly, professional, and trustworthy create positive impressions that are easily shared within students' social circles.

Hypothesis 2: *Academic service quality has a positive influence on student word of mouth (WOM).*

The Relationship Between Student Satisfaction and Student Word of Mouth

Student satisfaction not only reflects the internal quality of an institution but also serves as a key indicator of loyalty and external support in the form of WOM. Satisfied students are more likely to share their positive experiences, which ultimately strengthens the institution's image in the eyes of the public (Helgesen & Nasset, 2023; Hossain, 2021).

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model supports this relationship. Service quality as a stimulus influences the organism (in this case, student satisfaction), which in turn triggers a response in the form of WOM behavior (Ladhari, 2021). Research indicates that satisfaction is an important mediator between service quality and WOM (Tahir et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 3: *Student satisfaction has a positive influence on student word of mouth.*

Furthermore, the above deductive conceptual framework indicates that these three causal relationships form a logical flow and conceptual research model as follows: academic service quality directly influences student satisfaction and WOM and indirectly influences WOM through student satisfaction. This provides a strong foundation for developing quality management and marketing strategies for higher education institutions based on student experience.

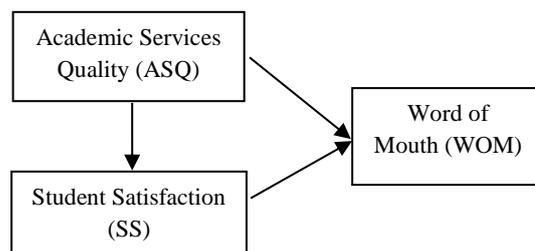


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Research

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Approach and Type of Research. This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey method. The purpose of explanatory research is to test the causal relationship between variables that have been formulated in the conceptual framework, namely the influence of academic service quality and student satisfaction on student word of mouth. This approach is considered appropriate because it allows researchers to measure perceptions objectively and test hypotheses using inferential statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population and Sample. The population in this study is all active students in the even semester at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta, in the 2024/2025 academic year. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, targeting students who had completed at least three semesters to ensure sufficient experience with campus academic services. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, or by adopting a minimum of 5–10 times the number of indicators in multiple regression analysis (Hair et al., 2019). The sample size was 105 students as respondents, considered sufficient to represent and meet the criteria for statistical validity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Data Collection Techniques. Data collection was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire covers three main variables: Academic Service Quality, measured through the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988); Student Satisfaction, measured based on the indicators of expectation fulfillment, comfort, and evaluation of learning experiences (Oliver, 1980; Baber, 2021); Word of Mouth (WOM), measured by the indicators: intention to recommend, willingness to share positive



experiences, and opinions on social media (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Prentice, 2021). The questionnaire instrument has been tested for validity and reliability through a limited pilot study before being used widely.

Data Analysis Techniques. The data collected were analyzed using the latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data analysis stages included: Validity Test using Pearson Product Moment correlation, and Reliability Test using Cronbach's Alpha value (>0.70). Furthermore, in this study, to test the direct and indirect relationships between variables, path analysis was used. This technique is an extension of multiple linear regression that allows researchers to test the causal effects, both direct and indirect, of independent variables on dependent variables through mediator variables. The regression equation model is as follows:

$SS = \rho_1 ASQ + \epsilon_1$ (substructure I); and $WOM = \rho_2 ASQ + \rho_3 SS + \epsilon_2$ (substructure II). The value of ϵ is the error, obtained from the formula: $\epsilon = \sqrt{1 - R^2}$. Path coefficient estimates (ρ) were calculated using SPSS software. The researcher calculated the path coefficients for each relationship in the model. These coefficient values indicate the extent to which one variable influence another. The statistical significance of each coefficient was tested using the p-value. A path is considered significant if $p < 0.05$, meaning that the relationship between variables in that path is statistically acceptable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Description of Respondents. As mentioned above, the sample size consisted of 105 students, comprising 47 males (44.80%) and 58 females (55.20%). Distribution of respondents by program of study: Economics 40 (38.10%), Communication 24 (22.90%), Entrepreneurship 34 (32.40%), International Relations 7 (6.70%). Distribution of respondents according to semester level: fourth semester 28 (27.70%), sixth semester 64 (61.00%), and eighth semester 13 (12.40%).

Research Variable Measurement. The measurement of research variables and their dimensions used a Likert Scale with 5 ordinal response options, ranging from a minimum score of 1 to a maximum of 5. The description of the average score profile of the variables is as follows: academic service quality (ASQ) 3.96; reliability dimension 4.0; responsiveness 3.83; assurance 3.7; empathy 3.9; tangibles 4.00. Student satisfaction (SS) variable 3.88; dimensions of academic service satisfaction 3.93; learning process 3.96; facilities and infrastructure 3.92; institutional image and reputation 3.84. The average score for the word of mouth (WOM) variable is 3.8; the dimensions of willingness to recommend is 3.79; positive talking is 3.86; support and advocacy is 3.80; informal promotion is 3.73. Thus, it can generally be concluded that the academic service quality profile and its dimensions are at a good level, student satisfaction is at a satisfactory level, and word of mouth is at a highly proactive level.

Validity and Reliability Test. The profile of the construct validity and reliability test results of the questionnaire instrument for all research variables is presented in Table 1. Construct validity is the extent to which a research instrument can measure the concept or construct that is intended to be measured. In the context of this study, the constructs in question include variables related to academic service quality, student satisfaction, and word-of-mouth behavior. Construct validity testing was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire items truly represent the dimensions and indicators established based on theoretical review. Meanwhile, reliability testing was aimed at determining the consistency of an instrument in measuring a construct. An instrument is considered reliable if it produces consistent results when measured at different times or on different respondents but under relatively similar conditions. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016), one of the commonly used methods for measuring the reliability of a questionnaire instrument is Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Reliability is considered adequate if Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1: Test of Validity and Reliability Item Questionnaire Variable Academic Services Quality (ASQ), Student Satisfaction (SS) and Word of Mouth (WOM).

Questionnaire Item	r Statistic	r table	Categori	Alpha Cronbach's	Categori
ASQ1	0.023	0.2492	Invalid		
ASQ2	0.612	0.2492	Valid		
ASQ3	0.554	0.2492	Valid		
ASQ4	0.581	0.2492	Valid		



ASQ5	0.685	0.2492	Valid	0.890	Reliable		
ASQ6	0.729	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ7	0.630	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ8	0.734	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ9	0.730	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ10	0.703	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ11	0.771	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ12	0.677	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ13	0.696	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ14	0.594	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ15	0.698	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ16	0.610	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ17	0.759	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ18	0.612	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ19	0.015	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ20	0.664	0.2492	Valid				
ASQ21	0.714	0.2492	Valid				
SS1	0.424	0.2492	Valid			0.823	Reliable
SS2	0.426	0.2492	Valid				
SS3	0.400	0.2492	Valid				
SS4	0.477	0.2492	Valid				
SS5	0.392	0.2492	Valid				
SS6	0612	0.2492	Valid				
SS7	0.342	0.2492	Valid				
SS8	0.416	0.2492	Valid				
SS9	0.412	0.2492	Valid				
SS10	0.406	0.2492	Valid				
SS11	0.585	0.2492	Valid				
SS12	0.504	0.2492	Valid				
WOM1	0.827	0.2492	Valid	0.684	Marginal		
WOM2	0.142	0.2492	Invalid				
WOM3	0.793	0.2492	Valid				
WOM4	0.794	0.2492	Valid				
WOM5	0.750	0.2492	Valid				
WOM6	0.796	0.2492	Valid				
WOM7	0.776	0.2492	Valid				
WOM8	0.770	0.2492	Valid				

Source: Primary data processed, 2025.

Cut off the correlation coefficient to test the validity of the questionnaire by referring to the statistical value at degree of freedom $n - 1 = 104$ and alpha 5%, which resulted in a table coefficient of $r = 0.2492$. The validity test results indicate that 39 questionnaire items are valid (statistical $r > 0.2492$) and two questionnaire items are invalid. Meanwhile, referring to Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70), the two research variables ASQ and SS fall into the high reliability category, while WOM is in the marginal reliability category.



Hypothesis Testing Results. Hypothesis 1 was analyzed using a simple regression equation model (substructure I), namely: $SS = 0.821 ASQ + 0.426$. The coefficient $p_1 = 0.821$ is positively significant (t-statistic = 14.594; sig. = 0.000). The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.671$. Conclusion: Hypothesis 1 is proven, namely: there is a strong positive significant influence of the academic services quality (ASQ) variable on student satisfaction (SS). This result provides empirical evidence that academic service quality is the main determinant in shaping students' positive perceptions of their academic experience. The dimensions of quality academic services—such as clarity of academic information, reliability of faculty and staff, speed of administrative services, and learning support facilities—can enhance student satisfaction because their needs and expectations are met. This finding aligns with the Servqual concept by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which emphasizes that service quality can be measured by the gap between customer expectations and perceptions. In the context of higher education, when the academic services received by students meet or exceed their expectations, high satisfaction is created (Zeithaml et al., 2020). In addition, the Customer Satisfaction Theory model states that customer satisfaction (in this case, students) is the result of a cognitive evaluation of the match between initial expectations and the actual performance of the service provider. If the academic services provided meet or exceed student expectations, then the level of satisfaction will increase significantly.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were analyzed using a multiple regression equation model (substructure II), namely: $WOM = 0.267 ASQ + 0.497 SS + 0.472$. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.528$. This indicates that the multiple regression equation model, namely the variables of academic service quality and student satisfaction, simultaneously contribute 52.80% to the variation in the word-of-mouth variable. The remaining 47.20% is influenced by other variables outside the model.

The results of hypothesis testing 2 show that the coefficient $p_2 = 0.267$ is positively significant (t statistic = 2.265; sig.=0.026). Conclusion: hypothesis 2 is proven, namely: there is a weak positive significant effect of the academic services quality (ASQ) variable on word of mouth (WOM). These results indicate that improvements in the quality of academic services provided by higher education institutions contribute to an increase in students' tendency to verbally share positive information about their campus, although the contribution is not very large. This finding implies that while academic service quality is important, it is not the sole or primary factor driving students to engage in word of mouth. Students likely evaluate their overall experience, including emotional, social, or non-academic factors, when deciding to recommend their institution to others. According to Zeithaml et al. (2020), word of mouth is an informal form of communication that is highly influenced by individuals' perceptions of service quality. However, the direct influence of service quality on WOM may vary depending on customers' (in this case, students') perceptions of value, satisfaction, or emotional engagement. Similarly, Hasan et al. (2023) state that word of mouth is more strongly influenced by mediating variables such as satisfaction or loyalty than by service quality directly. This is consistent with the results of this study, which show that ASQ has only a weak direct effect on WOM.

The results of hypothesis testing 3 show a coefficient of $p_3 = 0.497$, which is positively significant (t statistic = 4.216; sig.=0.000). Conclusion: hypothesis 3 is proven, namely: there is a moderate positive significant effect of the student satisfaction (SS) variable on word of mouth (WOM). This finding indicates that the higher the level of student satisfaction with their academic experience and the services they receive, the greater their tendency to share positive experiences about their institution with others, whether through social media, direct recommendations, or other forms of communication. In the context of higher education, student WOM holds strategic value as it can influence institutional reputation and attract prospective new students. Student satisfaction reflects an overall assessment of academic services, such as teaching quality, information availability, administrative services, campus facilities, and interpersonal relationships with faculty and staff. When students feel emotionally and functionally satisfied, they voluntarily become promoters of the institution through WOM. The findings of Yusof et al. (2023) also emphasize that student satisfaction is the primary determinant of loyalty and Word of Mouth in the higher education sector. This is reinforced by the findings of Rasyid et al. (2021), who state that student satisfaction significantly mediates the influence of service quality on WOM.

Table 2: Path Coefficients, P-Values, Determination, and Hypothesis Tests

Relations Structure	Path Coefficient	P-value	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Hypothesis
ASQ → WOM	0.267	0.026	0.0713	0.1327	0.2034	H ₂ accepted
ASQ → SS	0.821	0.000	0.6740	-	0.6740	H ₁ accepted
SS → WOM	0.497	0.000	0.2470	-	0.2470	H ₃ accepted

Source: Primary data processed, 2025.



The data in Table 2 above, path analysis proves that all research hypotheses are tested. The total influence of academic service quality on word of mouth is 20.34%; the influence of academic service quality on student satisfaction is 67.40%, and the influence of student satisfaction on word of mouth is 24.70%. Thus, it can be temporarily concluded that the influence of ASQ on WOM, both directly and indirectly (mediated by SS), falls into the weak category. Meanwhile, the direct influence of SS on WOM has a strong magnitude.

CONCLUSION

- The implications of these research findings emphasize the importance of private universities, particularly in the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta, to continue improving the overall quality of their academic services. Investments in training for educators and educational staff, improving academic information systems, and providing facilities relevant to student needs will directly impact their satisfaction. Thus, effective management of academic service quality not only enhances student satisfaction but also strengthens loyalty, active participation, and the institution's positive image in the eyes of the community.
- Although ASQ's direct contribution to WOM is relatively weak, improving the quality of academic services remains relevant as it can strengthen student satisfaction, which in turn encourages WOM behavior. Therefore, the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta needs to maintain and improve the quality of faculty services, academic administration, academic information systems, and the availability of learning facilities, while also paying attention to the holistic dimension of the student experience to optimize the WOM effect.
- Based on the results of several studies, the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta need to focus not only on the technical quality of services, but also on managing the student experience holistically. Elements such as the speed of academic services, lecturer empathy, and ease of access to information are key factors in increasing satisfaction. When student satisfaction is managed well, a strong and sustainable WOM effect will be created, reinforcing the positive image of the institution.

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