



Service Quality as a Determinant of Customer Satisfaction in Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

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Quality management and service quality are strategic components in improving customer satisfaction in Islamic educational institutions. This study aims to analyze the contribution of service quality to internal and external customer satisfaction using the SERVQUAL theory in the context of Islamic education. The method used is a literature review of the literature on education quality management, service quality, and customer satisfaction. The results of the study show that five dimensions of service quality, namely physical evidence, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, have a significant influence on the level of customer satisfaction. Internal customer satisfaction, especially teachers and education staff, also plays an essential role in supporting sustainable service quality. The implications of this research emphasize the need to develop an integrated quality system, enhance human resource competence, and strengthen communication between educational institutions and customers to deliver superior, responsive Islamic education services that meet the needs of stakeholders.

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INTRODUCTION

The main point of this study is that service quality in Islamic educational institutions has become a crucial element for ensuring customer satisfaction and institutional competitiveness. This point is increasingly important because parents, students, and communities now expect Islamic schools to provide reliable, transparent, and responsive services aligned with contemporary educational standards. Evidence from recent studies shows that many Islamic schools still face challenges, including inconsistent service delivery, insufficient managerial systems, and limited staff competence, creating a gap between theoretical expectations of quality management and the lived experiences of stakeholders (Alam & Alwi, 2021; Nuryanto & Arifin, 2020). Additional evidence suggests that stakeholders evaluate educational institutions not solely on academic achievement but also on how effectively services are delivered,

including communication, responsiveness, and relational practices (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). This evidence indicates a widening discrepancy between expected service quality and actual institutional performance, particularly in Islamic educational contexts that must balance academic and spiritual responsibilities. The paragraph concludes that this tension warrants a conceptual investigation into how service quality, as defined by the SERVQUAL model, can enhance customer satisfaction and guide continuous quality improvement in Islamic education.

Quality management is widely defined in contemporary literature as a structured, continuous effort to enhance institutional performance, operational efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction. Scholars emphasize that quality management requires coordinated processes involving planning, monitoring, and improving service delivery to meet or exceed customer expectations in dynamic environments (Akhtar & Khan, 2021; Oakl and, 2020). In the educational sector, service quality is described as a multidimensional construct shaped by customer perceptions, institutional culture, and the effectiveness of service encounters. Classical service principles, further developed in recent publications, highlight that service quality is shaped by the alignment between expected and perceived performance, rendering quality a relational and experiential phenomenon (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Tjiptono, 2020). The SERVQUAL model, continually updated and applied across various contexts, remains one of the most influential frameworks for evaluating service quality due to its five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Recent studies confirm that these dimensions strongly influence satisfaction levels in education and public service institutions (Alavi et al., 2021). Although widely used, literature also shows that institutions often struggle to operationalize these concepts consistently. This descriptive synthesis highlights the need for contextualized analyses that apply general service quality frameworks to Islamic educational settings.

Islamic educational institutions operate within a distinctive sociocultural and religious context that shapes stakeholder expectations in unique ways. In these settings, service quality is assessed not only through academic performance and administrative efficiency but also through moral, spiritual, and relational values embedded in daily interactions. Stakeholders expect Islamic schools to demonstrate professionalism while upholding Islamic ethics, ensuring that service delivery reflects the institution's identity. The SERVQUAL model provides a relevant analytical framework because its emphasis on responsiveness, empathy, and assurance aligns closely with Islamic educational philosophies that value care, trustworthiness, and community engagement (Ahmad & Hassan, 2021). The scope of this study thus focuses on examining how

the SERVQUAL dimensions apply to academic services, managerial processes, and school–community relationships in Islamic institutions. It also assesses how internal customers, such as teachers and administrative staff, influence overall service quality and stakeholder satisfaction. By adopting a library research approach, this study synthesizes contemporary scholarship in quality management, educational Leadership, and Islamic education to build a conceptual understanding of service quality dynamics. This contextual elaboration establishes a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the intersection of service quality principles with Islamic educational values.

Numerous studies have explored service quality and satisfaction in educational contexts, offering insights relevant to Islamic institutions. Alavi et al. (2021) demonstrated that the SERVQUAL dimensions significantly influence student satisfaction in higher education, with reliability and assurance emerging as dominant predictors. Nuryanto and Arifin (2020) examined quality service in Islamic schools and found that empathy and responsiveness are essential for building parental trust and institutional reputation. Rahmatullah et al. (2021) highlighted that teacher satisfaction strongly contributes to the effectiveness of school service delivery, positioning internal customers as crucial determinants of institutional quality. Additional studies by Darmawan (2021), Widodo (2020), and Akhtar and Khan (2021) reinforce the link between service quality, institutional trust, and performance improvement in education. Despite the growing body of literature, most studies emphasize empirical assessments rather than theoretical synthesis. Furthermore, few studies explore integrating Islamic values into service quality frameworks, and even fewer evaluate the roles of internal and external customers simultaneously. These gaps reveal the need for a conceptual study that bridges modern service quality theory with the spiritual and moral dimensions of Islamic education.

Although various studies have examined service quality in education, significant gaps remain regarding how Islamic educational institutions interpret and apply quality management frameworks. Most existing research focuses on general or secular educational settings, resulting in a limited understanding of how Islamic values shape stakeholder expectations and service experiences. Additionally, the SERVQUAL model has rarely been analyzed conceptually in Islamic educational contexts, particularly in relation to academic services, institutional governance, and community relations. Another research gap concerns the limited exploration of internal customer satisfaction, namely, teachers and administrative staff, as a fundamental component of service quality, despite its documented impact on external service delivery. Moreover, few studies propose integrative frameworks that combine global quality management theories with Islamic educational philosophies. The novelty of this

study lies in its attempt to conceptually bridge these domains by presenting a synthesized framework that incorporates religious, relational, and managerial elements into the SERVQUAL model. This conceptual advancement offers a more holistic understanding of service quality, explicitly tailored to Islamic educational environments, thereby enriching theory and providing practical insights for institutional development.

The purpose of this study is to conceptually explore how service quality influences customer satisfaction in Islamic educational institutions through the SERVQUAL model. This purpose is grounded in the need to strengthen institutional performance by aligning quality management principles with Islamic educational values and stakeholder expectations. Accordingly, this study addresses three central research questions. First, how do the five SERVQUAL dimensions function within academic, managerial, and community service contexts in Islamic educational institutions? Second, in what ways do internal customers, such as teachers and administrative staff, contribute to shaping overall service quality? Third, what conceptual linkages exist between quality management principles and stakeholder satisfaction in Islamic educational environments? These questions guide the study toward identifying integrative theoretical relationships that can inform practice. The conceptual focus enables the research to generate a comprehensive understanding of how service quality frameworks may be adapted to the social, cultural, and spiritual dynamics of Islamic education. This paragraph clarifies the study's directional focus by outlining its guiding questions.

This study provides an original contribution by integrating contemporary service quality theories with Islamic educational principles to develop a contextually grounded conceptual framework for evaluating service delivery. The core argument is that Islamic educational institutions require a multidimensional understanding of service quality that incorporates functional performance, relational interactions, and ethical-spiritual responsibilities. By adapting the SERVQUAL dimensions to align with the values of Islamic education, such as trustworthiness, care, and communal responsibility, this study argues that service quality becomes not only a managerial tool but also an ethical commitment. The study further posits that internal customer satisfaction is foundational to service effectiveness because teachers and staff play a central role in shaping stakeholder experiences. This argument underscores the importance of professional development, transparent communication, and continuous quality improvement within Islamic schools. Through its conceptual synthesis, the study offers a theoretical model that can inform future empirical research and guide educational leaders in implementing more holistic quality assurance systems. It concludes that strengthening service quality in Islamic

educational institutions requires integrating modern management frameworks with the moral and spiritual ethos intrinsic to Islamic schooling.

RESEARCH METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study focuses on conceptual, institutional, and managerial phenomena related to service quality and customer satisfaction within Islamic educational institutions. These units include academic service systems, administrative processes, internal quality assurance mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement practices, which shape the service experience in Islamic schools and universities, as highlighted by Al-Qahtani (2025). Institutional artefacts such as quality standards, operational guidelines, and policy frameworks are examined as core elements reflecting organizational efforts to improve customer satisfaction. This research also considers documented events and managerial routines associated with service delivery, aligning with current perspectives in educational quality management presented by Ibrahim et al., (2024). Such a multi-layered unit of analysis enables a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic educational institutions conceptualize and operationalize service quality. The focus on institutional processes provides a solid foundation for analyzing how theoretical propositions interact with practical implementation, consistent with contemporary literature that emphasizes organizational culture and service orientation in education (Piatti-Farnell et al., 2025). Through this analytical lens, the study seeks to interpret how service quality indicators influence satisfaction among internal and external customers in Islamic educational contexts.

This study adopts a qualitative research design through a library research approach, guided by updated methodological frameworks such as those discussed by Mohajan (2022) and Wilson (2023). The use of library research enables a systematic examination of conceptual discussions, empirical findings, and institutional documents related to service quality in Islamic education. This approach is particularly appropriate for studies aiming to synthesize theoretical constructs and interpret evolving research trends without field-based data collection. The design supports an in-depth exploration of the SERVQUAL dimensions and their relevance to educational service systems, building on recent conceptual advancements by Khan et al. (2024). By relying on qualitative interpretation, the study emphasizes reflective analysis of how reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles function within Islamic educational institutions. The conceptual orientation ensures the integration of both classical theories and new empirical insights from contemporary research published. Through this design, the study seeks to construct a theoretically coherent understanding of service quality and its implications for achieving

customer satisfaction in Islamic education.

The sources of information include recent academic books, peer-reviewed articles, institutional reports, and published policy documents. These sources provide theoretical discussions and empirical findings relevant to educational service quality and customer satisfaction, as emphasized by Aziz et al. (2024). Key contemporary works on service quality models, particularly updated evaluations of SERVQUAL in educational settings, are incorporated from Amoako (2023). The study treats these authors as intellectual informants whose perspectives contribute significantly to the conceptual foundation of Islamic educational service quality. Data collection is conducted by systematically identifying and retrieving documents from scholarly databases, digital libraries, and institutional repositories. The selection process emphasizes credibility, relevance, and recency, ensuring alignment with the conceptual boundaries of the research focus, as recommended by Mahmood (2024). Institutional guidelines and quality assurance frameworks are also analyzed to capture practical interpretations of service quality within Islamic educational institutions. This systematic sourcing process ensures both conceptual breadth and analytical depth.

Data analysis employs a multi-stage qualitative strategy inspired by the thematic analysis frameworks of Braun & Clarke (2021). The analysis begins with the systematic collection and organization of literature, including books, articles, and institutional documents. The second stage involves intensive reading to identify significant themes related to service quality indicators and stakeholder satisfaction. The third stage involves categorizing information into thematic clusters, such as SERVQUAL components, internal customer satisfaction, external customer needs, and institutional quality assurance practices, following the analytic guidelines proposed by Ahmad and Noor (2024). Subsequently, thematic synthesis is conducted to connect recurring patterns across the literature. The final stage applies content and descriptive analyses to interpret how contemporary Islamic educational institutions adopt and internalize quality service practices, consistent with Latif's (2025) analytical recommendations. This comprehensive analytical process ensures methodological rigor and enhances the reliability, interpretive depth, and conceptual clarity of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main finding of this library research demonstrates that the interaction between internal service systems and stakeholder expectations strongly shapes service quality in Islamic educational institutions. This finding emerges from the consistent emphasis across the literature that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy remain dominant predictors of

customer satisfaction (Rahmawati, 2025; Lastriyani et al., 2024). The sources show that these five dimensions not only structure how services are delivered but also influence how students, parents, and teachers perceive institutional credibility. The result indicates that institutions with well-established internal quality mechanisms tend to produce higher satisfaction levels, reinforcing the idea that service delivery is inseparable from organizational culture (Supriyadi et al., 2024). Thus, the finding concludes that Islamic education service quality must be evaluated holistically, linking academic, administrative, and relational components to customer satisfaction outcomes.

The library research reveals three prominent thematic patterns related to service quality and customer satisfaction. First, tangible elements such as facilities, equipment, and communication media demonstrate a significant role in shaping early impressions of institutional credibility, a trend supported by studies on educational services in Indonesia and the Middle East (Daryazadeh et al., 2023). Second, reliability and responsiveness consistently emerge as strong determinants of satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of timely academic services, accurate information delivery, and supportive administrative procedures (Tegowati & Palupi, 2023). Third, internal customer satisfaction, especially among teachers and staff, appears vital in influencing overall service quality, confirming that employee satisfaction is a precursor to customer satisfaction (Pamungkas et al., 2025). These themes collectively highlight that service quality in Islamic education is a multidimensional construct that requires integrated institutional management.

Table 1. Visualization of Findings

Service Quality Dimension	Description	Key Sources
Tangibles	Physical facilities, equipment, and communication media	Rahmawati (2025); Lastriyani et al. (2024)
Reliability	Accuracy and consistency of service delivery	Tegowati & Palupi (2023)
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers promptly	Pamungkas et al. (2025)
Assurance	Professional competence and trustworthiness	Daryazadeh et al. (2023)
Empathy	Personalized attention and understanding of customer needs	Nawi (2023)

The findings reaffirm that Islamic educational institutions must prioritize systematic quality management to enhance customer satisfaction. The evidence indicates that quality is not achieved solely through improving facilities but through strengthening institutional responsiveness and professional assurance

(Nawi, 2023). This aligns with the theoretical proposition that service systems must integrate both functional and emotional values to meet customer expectations. The interpretation of findings suggests that service quality excellence requires balancing institutional efficiency with personalized service delivery, a principle deeply emphasized in studies on educational service transformation (Supriyadi et al., 2024). Therefore, the findings reflect a strong correlation between institutional service behavior and long-term stakeholder trust.

Overall, the results generalize that customer satisfaction in Islamic education is fundamentally linked to the implementation of structured, consistent, and student-centered service strategies. The general patterns identified across the literature, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, function as universal indicators applicable across diverse institutional contexts. This generalization is supported by contemporary research showing that institutions adopting strong service quality frameworks experience improved stakeholder loyalty, positive school image, and greater community trust (Latriyani et al., 2024). Thus, the study concludes that Islamic educational institutions must maintain continuous quality improvement to remain competitive, credible, and responsive to evolving customer expectations.

The findings indicate that service quality remains a central determinant of satisfaction in Islamic education, aligning with previous studies that emphasize its importance in enhancing academic service. Research by Rahmawati (2025) supports the notion that tangible facilities play an essential role in shaping external perceptions of institutional quality. Similarly, Latriyani et al. (2024) demonstrate that physical and administrative improvements significantly elevate community trust. This alignment reinforces the argument that service quality in education integrates structural, operational, and cultural dimensions. Therefore, the analysis affirms that the SERVQUAL framework retains explanatory power in contemporary education research.

The observed importance of reliability and responsiveness is consistent with findings from Tegowati and Palupi (2023), who argue that timely information delivery significantly influences parent satisfaction. The correlation shown in this study highlights a structural linkage between administrative accuracy and customer trust. The consistency across studies indicates that academic institutions must focus on predictable service patterns to minimize dissatisfaction. Hence, responsiveness is not only a functional attribute but a relational indicator demonstrating institutional commitment.

Further analysis reveals that assurance represented by institutional professionalism and staff competence is crucial for sustaining long-term trust, supporting the findings of Daryazadeh et al. (2023). Their research shows that

professional knowledge and courteous behavior enhance perceived educational quality. The similarities indicate a recurring structural mechanism in which assurance serves as a psychological foundation for customer confidence. This confirms the theoretical understanding that trust emerges from both competence and relational integrity.

Empathy also emerges as a key determinant, aligning with Nawi (2023), who emphasizes that personalized attention significantly impacts emotional satisfaction among students and parents. The function of empathy appears to bridge structural service limitations by offering relational compensation. This correlation underscores the more profound organizational implication that Islamic education must integrate compassionate service with administrative expertise. Thus, empathy operates as both a functional and symbolic service characteristic.

The findings also highlight the internal customer perspective, demonstrating how teacher and staff satisfaction influences external customer experiences. This perspective aligns with (Pamungkas et al., 2025), who argue that satisfied internal stakeholders are better able to deliver superior services. Such alignment reveals an underlying mechanism where internal organizational culture directly affects service quality. Therefore, internal satisfaction operates as a structural predictor of external service outcomes.

Synthesizing these findings shows that the SERVQUAL dimensions operate interdependently rather than independently. Improvements in one dimension often influence the others, as shown in studies of institutional transformation within PTKIN environments (Supriyadi et al., 2024). This interdependence suggests that institutions should adopt integrated quality management systems rather than fragmented improvement efforts. The analysis reveals that service quality must be treated as a systemic construct requiring coordinated policy and managerial interventions.

The study offers several practical implications. For institutions, implementing structured quality assurance mechanisms can significantly enhance stakeholder satisfaction and loyalty. Practically, Islamic educational institutions should integrate SERVQUAL-based evaluations into routine assessments. Theoretically, the study contributes by reaffirming the relevance of classical service quality theories within modern Islamic educational contexts. It also expands the theoretical discourse by highlighting internal customer satisfaction as an essential yet underexplored determinant of service quality performance.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the central insight that service quality, particularly reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible elements, serves as the core determinant of customer satisfaction within Islamic educational institutions. This research demonstrates that when internal and external customers experience consistent, transparent, and student-centered services, institutional trust and educational effectiveness increase significantly. The study also contributes to scholarly discourse by refining the theoretical perspective on service quality in Islamic education, integrating contemporary SERVQUAL interpretations with the unique cultural and organizational characteristics of faith-based institutions. Methodologically, this research strengthens the use of library-based qualitative inquiry to reveal conceptual patterns that enrich the understanding of how service quality frameworks operate in non-market, religiously embedded educational settings.

However, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources, its focus on Islamic educational institutions within specific contextual parameters, and its lack of demographic variation by gender, age, and institutional type. The reliance on literature rather than field data also restricts the ability to capture the lived experiences of teachers, students, and parents. Therefore, future research should employ empirical methods such as surveys, interviews, and mixed-methods designs to generate more comprehensive, generalizable insights. Expanding the context to include diverse regions, institutional models, and stakeholder demographics will enable a more accurate depiction of service-quality dynamics and provide a stronger foundation for evidence-based policy and strategic educational development.

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