

Beyond SERVQUAL: Culturally Sensitive Approach for Optimizing School Service Quality Management

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Abstract:

This study analyses how service quality management can be optimized in schools to improve customer experience, focusing on SERVQUAL dimensions, including cultural relevance. A qualitative approach with a case study type was chosen to answer the focus of the study, using interview, observation, and documentation methods. Data analysis was carried out in stages, starting with data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The study results indicate that the dimensions of tangibles (physical facilities), reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly affect customer satisfaction and trust. This study also found that cultural relevance is important in increasing student and parent engagement. Respect for their culture makes the educational experience more positive. This study provides important implications regarding the need for schools to manage all dimensions of service quality well, including understanding and accommodating student cultural diversity, to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This study is expected to be a reference in developing better education policies.

Keywords: *SERVQUAL, Customer Experience, Cultural Diversity*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana manajemen kualitas layanan dapat dioptimalkan di sekolah guna meningkatkan pengalaman pelanggan, dengan fokus pada dimensi-dimensi SERVQUAL, termasuk relevansi budaya. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus dipilih untuk menjawab fokus penelitian tersebut, menggunakan metode wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara bertahap, dimulai dengan reduksi data, penyajian data, hingga penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dimensi tangibles (fasilitas fisik), reliabilitas, responsivitas, jaminan, dan empati secara signifikan memengaruhi kepuasan dan kepercayaan pelanggan. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa relevansi budaya memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dan orang tua. Penghargaan terhadap budaya mereka membuat pengalaman pendidikan menjadi lebih positif. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi penting mengenai perlunya sekolah untuk mengelola semua dimensi kualitas layanan dengan baik, termasuk memahami dan mengakomodasi keberagaman budaya siswa, guna menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang lebih inklusif dan mendukung. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi referensi dalam pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan yang lebih baik.

Kata Kunci: *SERVQUAL, Pengalaman Pelanggan, Keberagaman Budaya*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, schools' role as educational service providers has changed, focusing on academic achievement and the quality of services provided to various stakeholders, including students, parents, and the wider community. This change is driven by the increasing demand for educational service customers, which demands a better Learning experience, optimal facility management, and better interaction with educational staff (Nguyen, 2022; Yangailo & Sichinsambwe, 2024). Amid the era of globalization, schools now function as organizations that offer services, where service quality is one of the determining factors for school success. This makes the quality of service management very relevant to study, especially about the experience of customers who use the service (Kubińska-Jabcoń et al., 2022).

Service quality in schools can be seen from various perspectives, one is through the SERVQUAL (Service Quality) framework, which focuses on five main dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This theory was first introduced by Parasuraman et al. as a model for evaluating service quality from a customer perspective (Mosimanegape et al., 2020). SERVQUAL enables schools to understand the gap between customer expectations and perceptions of the service they receive. Integrating this approach into school management improves the customer experience and drives continuous improvement in the education system (Goula et al., 2022). Therefore, research on implementing service quality management in schools from a SERVQUAL perspective must be discussed academically.

However, behind its potential, there are still some significant challenges in implementing service quality management in schools. Many schools must deeply understand customer needs and expectations, creating a gap between the services provided and existing expectations. This causes dissatisfaction from parents and students, hurting the school's reputation and performance. This problem is increasingly complex in today's digital era, where perceptions of schools are not only shaped by direct interactions but also through social media platforms and online reviews (Kaur et al., 2021; Elmobark et al., 2023).

This study explores how implementing service quality management can help improve school customer experience. The main focus is to identify some of the obstacles that exist in service management in schools and evaluate effective strategies for improving service quality from the perspective of customers, both students and parents. Using the SERVQUAL approach, this study is expected to provide in-depth insights into how schools can better respond to customer expectations.

Previous studies have discussed service quality in various contexts, including education. Mary et al. (2023) found a positive correlation between SERVQUAL dimensions and customer satisfaction in secondary schools, highlighting the importance of empathy and responsiveness, which were also significant in this study. Morsi (2023) showed that physical aspects, such as school facilities, play an essential role in enhancing perceptions of service quality, a finding that is in line with the results of this study. In addition, Ojekunle et al. (2021) found that the dimensions of assurance and reliability influence customer

trust and loyalty in education, which is also relevant to the findings of this study. Overall, this study enriches the understanding of how SERVQUAL dimensions, including cultural relevance, influence customer experiences in the education sector.

Furthermore, research conducted by Hsu (2022) shows that service quality is a crucial indicator of operational performance in online nutrition consultation services. Using the E-SERVQUAL model, the analysis produces five primary dimensions: security/confidentiality, reliability, reactivity, efficiency, and tangible. Focusing on these dimensions can improve customer experience and operational performance.

Although this study has made significant contributions, a research gap remains, particularly regarding how SERVQUAL integration can be optimized in diverse school contexts regarding size, location, and customer demographics. Many studies focus more on higher education, so only some explicitly explore service quality management in primary and secondary schools. In addition, most existing studies have yet to consider the impact of technological developments and social media on customer perceptions of service quality in schools.

This study offers novelty by integrating the SERVQUAL framework with social media to shape perceptions of service quality in schools. Schools can utilize digital strategies, especially social media, to strengthen SERVQUAL dimensions such as responsiveness and empathy. Social media is used to build relationships with students, parents, and the community and improve the image and trust of the school, an aspect that has yet to be widely explored in previous studies. This study is expected to significantly contribute to the literature on service quality management in schools in the digital era.

This study explores how service quality management can be optimized in schools to improve customer experience, especially from a SERVQUAL perspective in Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Ma'arif Miftahul Ulum?. Specifically, this study will identify factors that influence customer perceptions of service quality in schools, evaluate service management strategies implemented in schools, and determine the extent to which these strategies are by the SERVQUAL dimensions. With a deep focus on service quality and customer experience, this study is expected to provide practical contributions to school managers and policymakers in improving the quality of education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen to understand how service quality management is implemented in schools and how it affects customer experience at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Ma'arif Miftahul Ulum, Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia. Descriptive research aims to systematically and factually describe phenomena to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between service quality and school customer experience (Fuchs, 2021). With this approach, researcher can explore the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers regarding the quality of services provided by schools.

Data collection techniques in this study include in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, students, and parents at MA Ma'arif Miftahul Ulum to explore their perceptions of the quality of school services. Observations were conducted to observe direct interactions between the school and customers (students and parents) and to evaluate facilities and services. The selection of this technique aims to obtain more comprehensive and realistic data. Documentation in the form of annual reports, satisfaction surveys, and other related documents was also collected to support the research findings.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis. Data from interviews and observations were analyzed to identify key themes relevant to service quality and customer experience. The analysis process was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/data verification. In the first stage, data reduction, the researcher selected information relevant to the focus of the study, eliminating unrelated or redundant data. Furthermore, in the data presentation stage, the filtered data was arranged in the form of a matrix, table, or diagram to facilitate the identification of thematic patterns and visualize the relationships between themes. Finally, in the drawing conclusions and verification stage, the researcher drew conclusions based on the existing findings and verified the conclusions with data triangulation, namely by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity of the findings (Khuzwayo et al., 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Tangibles

The results of this study indicate that the quality of tangibles or physical evidence plays an important role in creating a positive perception of the quality of services provided by the school. Physical facilities such as school buildings, classrooms, equipment, and the overall learning environment not only function as a place to learn but also reflect the school's commitment to providing an optimal learning experience for students.

Based on an interview with one of the students, he said, "Our classroom is very comfortable, technological facilities such as projectors and the internet are well available, this is very helpful in the learning process. In addition, the clean and tidy atmosphere in the classroom makes me more focused when studying" (W1.AS). This statement emphasizes the importance of good physical facilities in creating a conducive learning environment. The quality of comfortable facilities and equipped with modern technology can improve students' learning experiences, increase focus, and support social and academic interactions between students.

An interview with one of the parents also strengthened this finding, where the parent stated, "This school has a very good sports room and library, so that children not only study in class, but can also develop interests outside of academics" (W2.CN). Supporting facilities such as a sports room and a well-equipped library provide students with opportunities to develop both physically and intellectually. Extracurricular activities also play an important role in students'

social and emotional development.

In addition, interviews with several teachers showed the school's commitment to creating an interactive and modern learning environment through the use of the latest technology. The teacher explained that the school ensures that each classroom is equipped with the latest technology devices and provides training for teachers so that they can use technology effectively in teaching. This reflects the importance of managing tangibles, including teacher training and technology, to create a more dynamic and engaging learning experience, which in turn can improve student motivation and learning outcomes.

The results of the observation showed that classroom facilities are equipped with modern technological equipment, such as projectors and interactive boards, which support more interactive and collaborative learning. The ergonomic design of the classroom, including comfortable tables and chairs and good lighting, also supports student comfort. In addition, a spacious and well-organized library provides access to a variety of books and digital resources, while study rooms equipped with discussion areas support group activities.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the quality of tangibles, including physical facilities and technology, has a direct impact on customer comfort and satisfaction (students and parents). Good facilities not only support the academic learning process but also the social and emotional development of students, creating a holistic learning environment.

Reliability

Findings related to reliability focus on MA Ma'arif Miftahul Ulum's consistency and trust in fulfilling promises and providing promised services. Reliability includes the school's ability to provide stable, reliable, and expected educational services in teaching, evaluation, and support for students and parents. This finding shows that the school consistently provides quality services and strives to ensure satisfactory results for the entire educational community.

One of the parents said, "I always feel calm because this school always provides clear and timely information about school activities and my child's development. They also always send learning outcome reports and provide important notifications well in advance so that I can prepare myself well as a parent" (W4.DA). This shows that the school is reliable in providing consistent and timely information. The school builds trust through transparent and regular communication and ensures that important information is delivered well in advance.

A student also added, "I never worry about activities at school because everything is well organized, and there are no sudden changes. All information regarding the schedule of activities or events is delivered well in advance so that we, as parents, feel prepared and not confused" (W5.KR). This finding confirms the importance of regularity and consistency in school operations to increase parental and student trust.

The school is committed to maintaining parental involvement through clear and proactive communication. A teacher stated, "We always try to provide accurate information to parents so that they know their child's progress at school. We hold regular consultation sessions and provide monthly reports on students'

academic progress and social-emotional aspects. In this way, we hope that parents can actively participate in their child's education" (W6.DS). This reflects the school's proactive efforts to ensure parental involvement in their child's education and maintain transparency in communication.

The observation results showed that the school consistently provided timely and regular information to parents. The delivery of student progress reports and a well-organized activity schedule indicated an effective communication system. Consistency in educational services, such as delivering teaching materials according to the curriculum, also increased parental trust in the quality of education.

Overall, all these aspects contribute to the reliability of the school's services, providing a sense of security and trust for parents. These findings reflect the reliability dimension in the SERVQUAL model, which emphasizes the importance of consistency and regularity in the relationship between schools and parents to create a stable educational environment and support students' learning experiences.

Responsiveness

In the context of research on responsiveness in schools, these findings highlight how the ability of educational institutions to respond to the needs and expectations of students and parents can contribute to their satisfaction and engagement. Responsiveness includes aspects such as the speed of handling complaints, the availability of information, and the ability of staff to provide fast and efficient service, all of which play an important role in creating a positive learning experience. Responsiveness includes the ability of schools to respond to customer needs and requests quickly and efficiently. This explanation aligns with one student's statement, "When I have problems with assignments or learning, the teachers are always ready to help and answer my questions quickly. They also often give extra time outside of class hours to explain material that I don't understand. This makes me feel supported and more confident in my learning process" (W7.SB).

The informant's statement reflects the high level of responsiveness of the teachers at the school. Students feel that when they face difficulties with assignments or Learning, teachers are always ready to help and provide answers quickly. This shows the teacher's commitment to supporting the student's Learning process and ensuring that each individual gets their attention. The importance of responsiveness in education lies in its ability to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. By providing additional time outside of class hours to explain the material, teachers improve students' understanding and build their confidence in facing academic challenges. This emphasis on support and openness in communication creates a positive relationship between students and teachers, which can increase student motivation and engagement in the Learning process. Overall, this interview confirms that high responsiveness from teachers is critical in creating an effective and satisfying learning experience for students. Then, one of the teachers also stated, "We always try to respond to questions from parents or students as quickly as possible, either via WhatsApp or other online platforms. In addition, we also hold regular meetings to discuss

student development and provide the necessary information. In this way, we hope to build good and transparent communication with all related parties" (W8.BN).

The informant's statement above shows the school's commitment to improving responsiveness to the needs of parents and students. By trying to respond to questions quickly through various platforms, such as WhatsApp and other online platforms, the school creates an efficient and easily accessible communication channel. This increases parental involvement in their children's education process and shows that the school values feedback and concerns from parents. In addition, the implementation of regular meetings to discuss student development reflects the school's proactive approach to building transparent and open relationships. These meetings allow parents to get direct information about their child's academic progress and well-being while creating space for discussion and exchanging ideas. This statement highlights the importance of using technology to improve responsiveness, aligning with digital technology's development in education. In addition, one of the guardians also said, "I really appreciate that when I have questions, the school responds quickly, even outside school hours. They are always open to discussion and provide clear and precise solutions. This makes me feel supported and shows that the school really cares about our needs as parents" (W9.KN).

The informant's statement above reveals the school's high level of responsiveness in responding to parents' questions and needs, even outside school hours. The quick response and clear solutions show that the school is focused on delivering education in the classroom and pays extra attention to supporting students and parents outside of formal learning hours. This indicates a firm commitment from the school to maintain good communication and ensure that parents' needs and concerns are addressed promptly. This open and responsive approach creates a sense of trust and active involvement from parents, which is crucial in building positive and productive relationships between schools and families. This responsiveness shows how the school strives to create a caring and supportive environment for students and the entire school community.



Figure 1. Responsiveness in the School Environment

The results of observations related to responsiveness in this school show that the school consistently provides fast and adequate attention to the needs of students and parents. First, teachers and school staff respond quickly to every question asked, both by students and parents, through digital platforms such as WhatsApp or email. Second, teachers also provide additional time outside of school hours to help students understand complex material, which shows the

teacher's commitment to supporting students' academic development. Third, the school regularly holds meetings with parents to discuss students' academic and non-academic developments and to receive input from parents. These activities show how the school strives to maintain open communication and ongoing support. Therefore, it can be understood that the three indicators above are part of the responsiveness dimension in the SERVQUAL model.

Assurance

In the findings on assurance, the main focus is on the school's ability to provide confidence to students and parents regarding the quality of educational services they receive. This assurance includes knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes demonstrated by teaching and administrative staff, which contribute to the trust and satisfaction of parents and students. This finding highlights the importance of providing adequate assurance so all parties feel safe and secure in the educational process. Assurance relates to the competence and credibility of school staff in providing a sense of security to customers. The statement above aligns with one of the students who stated, "I feel safe studying here because the teachers are very experienced and I know they understand what they are teaching. In addition, they are always ready to answer questions and provide guidance when I have difficulties, so I feel supported in my learning process" (W10.HS).

This informant's statement shows that the level of assurance provided by the school is very high, especially through the competence and expertise of its teachers. The sense of security expressed by students reflects their belief in the teacher's ability to deliver the subject matter well and adequately. Teacher experience is an important factor that improves student understanding and provides the emotional support needed during the Learning process. The presence of teachers ready to answer questions and provide guidance when students face difficulties shows the school's commitment to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. This increases students' self-confidence and encourages active involvement in learning, positively impacting their academic achievement. This assurance also strengthens the relationship between students and teachers, which is important for the overall success of education. This shows that the sense of security obtained from teacher competence positively impacts students' Learning experiences. This is also in line with one of the parents, "We trust this school because the teachers seem very competent, and we feel that our children are in the right hands. We also often see how they interact with students, which shows the dedication and attention they give in teaching" (W11.NA).

The results of these interviews reflect a strong level of assurance the school provides to parents regarding the quality of education their children receive. Parents' confidence in the competence of teachers shows that they observe not only the academic abilities of teachers but also the attitude and dedication they show when interacting with students. The feeling that their child is "in good hands" creates a deep sense of security and trust, which is crucial in supporting an effective educational process. Positive interactions between teachers and students strengthen parental trust and increase students' motivation and confidence in Learning. The dedication of teachers, as seen in how they teach and pay attention to students' needs, creates a supportive learning environment where children feel

valued and encouraged to achieve their full potential. This confirms the importance of assurance in education, which helps build strong relationships between parents, students, and the school. Parents' confidence in the competence of the school increases their sense of security in the educational process of their children. One teacher also stated, "We always make sure that we provide clear and convincing information to parents so that they feel comfortable and confident with the teaching and learning process at this school. We do this through regular meetings, regular reports, and various communication channels that are available to answer parents' questions" (W12.SO).

From this interview, the informant emphasized the importance of assurance provided by the school to parents regarding the teaching and Learning process. The school's efforts to provide clear and convincing information create a safe and comfortable environment for parents, strengthening their trust in the quality of education provided. By holding regular meetings and submitting periodic reports, the school is committed to maintaining transparency and openness in communication so that parents can understand their children's development and challenges. Various communication channels to answer parents' questions show that the school is ready to listen and provide the support needed, confirming that they care about parents' concerns and needs. In this way, the assurance provided increases parents' trust and contributes to their involvement in their children's education process, creating a positive synergy between home and school. From this, assurance plays a vital role in creating a sense of security and trust for students and parents, ultimately positively impacting customer satisfaction.

The results of observations of the three interviews revealed that the key to creating a high level of trust between parents and schools consists of several parts, including: First, teacher competence, which is the central pillar so that parents feel confident that teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to educate their children. This can be seen from parents' recognition of the teacher's experience and ability to explain the subject well. Second, positive interactions between teachers and students are also clearly visible. Teachers deliver material and show dedication and attention in every interaction with students. This creates a strong emotional bond and makes students feel more comfortable asking questions and discussing. Third, delivering clear and convincing information is essential in creating a sense of security for parents. Schools are proactive in providing transparent information about children's activities and developments, increasing parental trust in school management. Then, there is an effective communication channel that facilitates parental involvement so that they feel heard and cared for. Schools use various methods, including face-to-face meetings and online communication, to ensure parents stay connected with their children's educational development. Finally, regular meetings and periodic reports show the school's commitment to maintaining good relationships with parents. Through regular progress reports and scheduled meetings, the school ensures that parents are constantly updated on their child's academic progress so they can actively participate in the Learning process.

Empathy

In the findings on empathy, the main focus is on the school's ability to understand and feel the needs and feelings of students and parents. This empathy is reflected in the attitudes of teachers and school staff, who strive to create strong relationships with students and families so that all parties feel cared for and appreciated. This finding highlights the importance of an empathetic approach in education, where attention to student's emotional and social needs can increase their involvement in the Learning process and create a more harmonious school environment. Empathy includes personal attention and care given by the school to each student and parent. The explanation above is in line with the statement of one of the students who also said, "The teachers here really care about us; they not only teach but also listen to our problems and are always ready to provide support when we need it" (W13.DA).

This statement reflects the high level of empathy shown by teachers towards students. When students state that teachers genuinely care about them, it indicates a strong and trusting relationship between students and teachers. The attitude of teachers who not only teach but also listen to students' problems shows that they realize the importance of the emotional aspect of education. The support provided by teachers when students experience difficulties creates a safe and comfortable environment where students feel valued and cared for. This is important because students who feel heard are more motivated and engaged in Learning. In education, teacher empathy can increase student and parent satisfaction and contribute to improved academic outcomes. This emotional solid involvement also shows that the school does not only function as a place of formal education but also as a community that supports the holistic development of students. Something similar was also explained by one of the parents who said, "I feel that this school really cares about my child's development, they always listen to our input and concerns attentively and respond with appropriate actions" (W14.NM).

The results of the interviews with these informants show that the school has a proactive and empathetic approach to parents and student development. When parents feel that the school cares, this reflects the school's commitment to listening and paying attention to family concerns and input. This attitude builds trust between parents and the school and creates an effective communication channel. When parents' concerns are heard and responded to appropriately, this can increase parental satisfaction and trust in the educational institution. In the context of education, the attention given by the school to parental input contributes to creating a more inclusive and responsive Learning environment, which in turn supports children's academic and social development. This shows that the school's empathy can improve its and its parents' relationship. Similarly, the results of the interview with one of the teachers added, "We always try to approach students in a personal way so that they feel comfortable and open to us, especially when they face challenges in Learning" (W15.BU).

These interview statements indicate that the school takes a highly empathetic and responsive approach to interacting with students. This effort to approach students personally demonstrates an awareness that each student has

unique needs that must be addressed. When students feel comfortable and open, especially when facing Learning challenges, it creates a space to share their feelings and concerns without fear of judgment. This attitude builds trust and strengthens the relationship between students and teachers, which is essential in creating a positive learning environment. With this personal approach, students are more likely to be actively engaged in Learning and feel supported in their academic journey. Additionally, by listening and responding to students' challenges, teachers can provide more appropriate and relevant support, supporting students' overall academic success and social development.

Teachers at this school actively take a personal approach to each student, ensuring they feel comfortable and open in sharing their problems or challenges. This approach is seen in how teachers listen to students' problems attentively and provide emotional support when needed. Parents also feel that the school pays serious attention to their concerns and responds with appropriate actions, creating trust and comfort. In addition, teacher involvement in student development, both in academic and social aspects, is apparent, with ongoing efforts to monitor and support their progress.

Cultural Relevance

This study shows that cultural relevance plays an important role in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Based on interviews with teachers and principals, it was found that schools strive to integrate the cultural values of students and their communities into the educational process. Principals explained that activities such as celebrating traditional holidays were used as a means to respect local culture while strengthening students' relationships with the school environment. Parents interviewed appreciated this step, stating that respect for local culture made their children feel more valued and proud of their cultural identity. The researchers interpreted that recognizing cultural diversity not only increased students' engagement in the learning process but also created a strong sense of belonging to the school.

In addition, cultural relevance also had a positive impact on students' emotional and social engagement in learning. Teachers emphasized that integrating cultural elements into teaching materials made students feel more connected to learning. One teacher stated, "When we relate learning to their culture, students become more enthusiastic and motivated" (W12.SO).

Parents also felt that this approach helped build trust between the school and families. Observation results show that the use of local languages in learning makes students feel more comfortable and confident while strengthening their cultural identity. As expressed by the principal and history teacher, a curriculum that accommodates local cultural values helps students understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. In addition, culturally based extracurricular activities, such as regional dance and traditional music, provide opportunities for students to contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. Thus, a culturally relevant learning environment not only supports the development of students' cultural identities but also allows them to remain actively involved in meaningful learning processes. Overall, cultural relevance not only enriches students' learning experiences but also serves as a bridge to strengthen the relationship between the

school and the community. By creating a space that values cultural diversity, schools not only educate students in academic aspects but also shape their character as individuals who understand and appreciate differences, which is very important in building a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the tangibles dimension (physical facilities) plays an important role in creating a conducive learning environment. This finding is in line with the research of Chuku et al. (2024), which states that adequate educational infrastructure increases student comfort and strengthens the school's image in the eyes of parents. However, this study also found that the functional aspects and relevance of facilities have a more important role than the aesthetics or modernity of physical facilities, which supports the findings of Brown and Alqahtani et al. (2023) regarding the importance of the function of facilities in supporting the learning process.

The dimensions of reliability and responsiveness, which were also found to be significant in this study, support the results of Al-Fadli's (2020) study. He stated that the reliability of educational institutions in fulfilling commitments is the main factor that increases customer trust. In addition, the responsiveness of schools in responding to the needs of students and parents is consistent with the results of Zhou et al. (2021), which emphasizes that fast and timely responses can create better relationships between schools and families. This study adds that personal responsiveness is more appreciated than generic responses.

The assurance dimension, which involves teacher competence and customer trust, is also consistent with previous research. For example, Siyum's (2024) study found that teacher competence is a major predictor of parental trust in educational institutions. In addition, this study supports Jabarethina's (2023) findings that positive interactions between teachers and students increase students' sense of security and motivation. This study extends these findings by highlighting the importance of proactive and planned communication, such as providing regular reports, as an integral part of the assurance dimension.

The empathy dimension, which includes attention to the individual needs of students and parents, supports Suliman and Mouselli's (2024) study. They stated that empathy is a key element in building good interpersonal relationships in schools. This finding is also supported by Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, as explained in Amar et al.'s (2024) study, that psychological safety is a primary requirement for effective learning. In addition, teacher emotional support, as found by Perera and Dabney (2020), also contributes to students' social and psychological well-being. This study extends previous findings by showing that attention to parents' needs, such as through open communication, is equally important for creating harmonious relationships between schools and families.

The cultural relevance dimension also supports previous research, such as that expressed by Hayashi et al. (2022), which emphasizes the importance of schools adapting cultural values and practices in the educational process. This study found that celebrating traditional holidays in schools increased student and parent engagement, which supports Chen's (2024) finding that respect for

students' culture can strengthen their sense of belonging to the school. This study adds that cultural relevance not only creates engagement but also builds trust between the school and its community.

Overall, the findings of this study largely support the results of previous studies with some additional new perspectives. This study emphasizes the importance of managing service quality dimensions holistically, which includes aspects of physical facilities, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and cultural relevance. Thus, this study not only strengthens the existing literature but also makes an important contribution to understanding holistic approaches that can improve customer experience in the education sector.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study highlights the main finding that service quality in schools, managed through the SERVQUAL dimensions, significantly impacts customer experience, both students and parents. Dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are essential for customer satisfaction and trust. In addition, this study adds a dimension of cultural relevance that has yet to be widely studied in previous studies but is relevant in education in Indonesia, where cultural diversity influences the interaction between school students and parents. An important lesson from this study is that holistic service quality, including academic aspects and cultural values, plays a vital role in building harmonious relationships between schools, students, and parents. Thus, schools must maintain service quality across these dimensions to increase customer engagement and satisfaction.

This study makes an essential contribution to the academic field by renewing the perspective on service quality management in schools, primarily by introducing cultural relevance as an additional variable in the SERVQUAL model. Methodologically, this study strengthens the qualitative approach as an effective tool for exploring customer experiences and perceptions in the educational context. Therefore, further research involving more schools from various regions, using survey methods that cover a more diverse population regarding gender and age, is needed to obtain a more comprehensive picture. The results of this further research will provide a more robust basis for more targeted educational policies in improving school service quality.

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