

## DOES EXCELLENT SERVICE MANAGEMENT IMPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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### ABSTRACT

Administrative service quality has become a critical component of student experience in higher education, particularly as institutions face increasing demands for efficiency, responsiveness, and service consistency. This study examines whether excellent service management significantly improves administrative service quality in higher education. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 277 undergraduate students who had directly interacted with faculty-level administrative services. Excellent service management was operationalized through indicators of responsiveness, accuracy, timeliness, professionalism, clarity, and information consistency, while administrative service quality was measured using the SERVQUAL framework. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, validity and reliability testing, and simple linear regression analysis. The findings indicate that students generally perceive both excellent service management and administrative service quality positively. Regression results reveal a strong, significant effect of excellent service management on administrative service quality, accounting for 77.7% of the variance in students' perceptions. Interpersonal service attributes emerged as the strongest, while digital responsiveness was identified as a key area for improvement. The study contributes to the higher education service literature by empirically establishing that excellent service management is a measurable antecedent of administrative service quality. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of aligning managerial service practices with both face-to-face and digital service delivery to support student-centered administration in higher education.

Keywords: excellent service; administrative service quality; SERVQUAL

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, higher education institutions have increasingly been evaluated not only on academic excellence but also on the quality of administrative services that shape students' overall learning experience. Administrative units serve as the primary interface between students and institutional governance, handling academic registration, documentation, information provision, and academic support services. As universities adopt a more student-centered orientation, administrative service quality has become a strategic determinant of student satisfaction, institutional reputation, and student retention (Gao, 2020). Consequently, improving administrative service quality is no longer viewed as a peripheral operational task but as a core component of higher education management.

The digital transformation of higher education has further intensified expectations toward administrative services. Students increasingly demand services that are fast, accurate, transparent, and accessible through digital platforms such as online portals, email, and instant messaging applications. While digitalization promises efficiency and accessibility, empirical evidence suggests that many higher education institutions continue to struggle with inconsistent information delivery, slow response times, and fragmented service procedures, particularly at the faculty or departmental level (Purwani et al., 2024). These challenges indicate that technological adoption alone is insufficient; effective management of service delivery processes remains critical.

Service quality research in higher education has predominantly relied on the SERVQUAL framework, which conceptualizes service quality as five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Despite its longstanding use, SERVQUAL remains relevant in contemporary studies because it captures both functional and relational aspects of service experiences. Recent studies confirm that the SERVQUAL dimensions continue to predict student satisfaction and loyalty in higher education contexts significantly (Cinkir et al., 2022; Dugenio-Nadela et al., 2023). However, most SERVQUAL-based studies focus primarily on measuring perceived service quality outcomes rather than examining the managerial mechanisms that shape them.

One managerial construct that has received growing attention in applied service research is excellent service management. Excellent service management emphasizes not only efficiency and procedural compliance but also responsiveness, accuracy, friendliness, clarity of information, and consistency in service delivery (Tjiptono, 2022). In higher education administration, excellent service management reflects how staff operationalize service standards in daily interactions with students. While this concept is widely adopted in professional practice and training, its empirical operationalization as a measurable antecedent of service quality remains limited in academic research (Bien-aimé et al., 2026).

Several recent studies have examined administrative service quality in higher education, yet important conceptual and methodological limitations persist. First, Mustafa et al. (2022) demonstrated that administrative staff performance significantly influences student satisfaction; however, their study treated service quality as a direct outcome without isolating specific managerial practices that drive quality improvements. Second, Ibrahim et al. (2023) applied SERVQUAL to assess administrative services in universities, but their analysis remained descriptive, offering a limited explanation of how service quality is produced through management processes. Third, Purwani et al. (2024) explored administrative transformation in the digital era, highlighting inefficiencies and coordination problems, yet did not quantitatively model managerial service excellence as a determinant of service quality.

A critical limitation of these studies lies in their tendency to conflate service quality outcomes with service management practices. As a result, the literature provides limited empirical evidence explaining *why* administrative services are perceived as high or low quality, particularly at the faculty level where daily student–staff interactions occur most frequently. Furthermore, most studies focus on university-wide administrative systems, potentially overlooking variations in service implementation across faculties and departments. This gap is significant because faculty-level administrative units often operate with distinct organizational cultures, resource constraints, and service routines that directly affect student experiences.

The growing reliance on digital administrative services amplifies the urgency of addressing this gap. While digital platforms are expected to enhance responsiveness and transparency, empirical findings indicate that digital service responsiveness—such as response time through instant messaging applications—remains one of the weakest aspects of administrative service quality in many higher education institutions (Umamul Muslikhin et al., 2025). This suggests that excellent service management, rather than technology alone, plays a decisive role in shaping perceived service quality in both physical and digital service environments.

Integrating excellent service management with the SERVQUAL framework offers a promising analytical approach to addressing these limitations. SERVQUAL provides a robust framework for measuring perceived service quality, while excellent service management offers an operational and behavioral perspective on how service quality is enacted in practice. Recent conceptual studies argue that combining managerial service excellence with service quality measurement enables a more comprehensive understanding of service performance, particularly in education and public service contexts (Siti Maryam, 2024; Firdaus et al., 2024). However, empirical studies that quantitatively test this integration in higher education administration remain scarce.

Therefore, the novelty of the present study lies in its empirical examination of excellent service management as a measurable antecedent of administrative service quality, operationalized through the SERVQUAL dimensions, within a faculty-level context. Unlike previous studies that treat service quality as an isolated outcome, this research explicitly models the relationship between managerial service practices and perceived service quality. By focusing on faculty-level administration, the study provides granular insights into everyday service interactions that are often overlooked in university-wide analyses.

Based on this background, the central research problem addressed in this study is the limited empirical understanding of how excellent service management influences administrative service quality in higher education. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research question: *Does excellent service management significantly improve administrative service quality in higher education?* Correspondingly, the objective of this research is to analyze the effect of excellent service management on students' perceptions of administrative service quality, using a quantitative approach grounded in the SERVQUAL framework. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by clarifying the role of service management in shaping perceptions of service quality and by providing evidence-based recommendations to improve administrative services in higher education institutions.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design. A quantitative approach was selected to systematically examine the relationship between excellent service management and administrative service quality, as perceived by students. A survey design is appropriate for capturing large-scale perceptual data and for testing hypothesized relationships between variables through statistical modeling, particularly when the objective is to assess the magnitude and direction of influence between constructs. The research framework positioned excellent service management as the independent variable and administrative service quality as the dependent variable, operationalized through the SERVQUAL dimensions. The study focused on measuring the extent to which excellent service management practices shape perceived service quality in higher education administration.

### *Research Setting and Participants*

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Computer Science and Education, Ngudi Waluyo University, Indonesia. This faculty was selected because it is an administrative unit with frequent, direct interaction between students and administrative staff, making it a relevant context for evaluating administrative service quality. The research population consisted of all active undergraduate students who had accessed faculty administrative services. Data were collected in December 2025 through an online questionnaire distributed via institutional communication channels. A saturated sampling (total sampling) technique was employed, whereby all students who met the inclusion criteria and responded to the questionnaire were included in the analysis. This technique was chosen to obtain a comprehensive representation of service users within the faculty and to minimize sampling bias at the faculty level. A total of 277 valid responses were collected and analyzed. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirements for regression analysis and provides sufficient statistical power for testing the proposed relationship.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 277)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	223	80.5
	Male	54	19.5
	Total	277	100
Study Program	Elementary School Teacher Education	128	46.2
	Informatics Engineering	66	23.8
	Early Childhood Teacher Education	62	22.4
	Vocational Education in Fashion Design	21	7.6
	Total	277	100

The distribution of respondents indicates that participants came from diverse academic programs, reflecting varied experiences with administrative services and strengthening the representativeness of the data.

#### *Research Variables and Operational Definitions*

This study examined two main variables: excellent service management as the independent variable and administrative service quality as the dependent variable. Excellent service management refers to the extent to which administrative staff consistently apply service excellence principles in their daily interactions with students. This construct reflects not only procedural efficiency but also the quality of interpersonal interactions between staff and service users. In this study, excellent service management is operationalized through indicators related to responsiveness in handling requests, accuracy of service outcomes, timeliness of service completion, professionalism and friendliness of staff attitudes, comfort during service interactions, clarity of information provided, and consistency of information among administrative personnel. These indicators collectively capture how service standards are translated into practical, observable behaviors within administrative processes.

Administrative service quality represents students' overall perceptions of the quality of administrative services they receive throughout the academic process. This variable is measured using the SERVQUAL framework, which conceptualizes service quality in terms of five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles refer to the physical aspects of the service environment and staff appearance; reliability reflects the consistency and accuracy of service delivery; responsiveness indicates the promptness and willingness of staff to assist students, including through digital communication channels; assurance relates to staff competence and the sense of trust conveyed during service interactions; and empathy captures the extent to which staff provide individualized attention and demonstrate understanding of students' needs. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive assessment of administrative service quality from the students' perspective.

Table 2. Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Indicators	Description
Excellent Service Management (X)	X1	Speed of staff response
	X2	Accuracy of service outcomes
	X3	Timeliness of service completion
	X4	Staff friendliness and attitude
	X5	Comfort during service interaction
	X6	Clarity of information provided
	X7	Consistency of information among staff
Administrative Service Quality (Y)	Y1	Cleanliness and organization of service area (Tangibles)
	Y2	Professional appearance of staff (Tangibles)
	Y3	Consistency of service delivery (Reliability)
	Y4	Smoothness of service procedures (Reliability)

Variable	Indicators	Description
	Y5	Staff alertness in handling requests (Responsiveness)
	Y6	Responsiveness via digital platforms (Responsiveness)
	Y7	Staff knowledge and competence (Assurance)
	Y8	Genuine attention to students (Empathy)
	Y9	Ability to understand student needs (Empathy)

*Research Instrument*

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on the theory of excellent service management and the SERVQUAL model. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement based on their service experiences. The instrument consisted of 7 items measuring excellent service management and 9 items measuring administrative service quality. Prior to full-scale distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance of wording, ensuring that all items were understandable and contextually appropriate for respondents.

*Validity and Reliability Testing*

Instrument validity was assessed using Pearson product–moment correlation, comparing each item score with the total variable score. All items demonstrated correlation coefficients exceeding the critical r-value ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that each item validly measured its intended construct. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s Alpha to assess internal consistency. The results indicated excellent reliability for both variables.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Interpretation
Excellent Service Management (X)	7	0.943	Very reliable
Administrative Service Quality (Y)	9	0.959	Very reliable

Cronbach’s Alpha values above 0.90 indicate very high internal consistency, confirming that the instrument yields stable, reliable measurements suitable for further statistical analysis.

*Data Collection Procedure*

The data collection process began with distributing the online questionnaire to eligible students. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and would be used solely for research purposes. All submitted responses were screened to remove duplicates or incomplete entries. Only valid and complete responses were included in the final dataset.

*Data Analysis Techniques*

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software and proceeded through several systematic stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to examine the distribution, mean scores, and overall response patterns for each indicator. This stage provided an overview of students’ perceptions regarding the implementation of excellent service management and the quality of administrative services. The descriptive results helped identify the dominant service attributes and aspects that required improvement. Second, validity and reliability were tested to ensure the measurement instrument’s quality and consistency. Item validity was assessed by examining the correlation between each item and its corresponding construct score, while reliability was evaluated using internal consistency. These procedures ensured that all indicators accurately represented the intended constructs and produced stable results suitable for inferential analysis.

Finally, simple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of excellent service management on administrative service quality. This analytical technique was selected because the study aimed to test a direct and unidirectional relationship between a single

independent variable and a single dependent variable. Regression analysis enabled the assessment of the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship, thereby providing empirical evidence on the extent to which excellent service management contributes to perceived administrative service quality. Statistical significance was evaluated at a 0.05 confidence level.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables*

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine students' perceptions of excellent service management and administrative service quality. Mean scores were used to identify response tendencies across indicators measured using a five-point Likert scale. Overall, the findings indicate that students perceived both excellent service management and administrative service quality positively. Most indicators achieved mean scores above 4.00, suggesting that administrative services were generally evaluated as good.

Table 4. Mean Scores of Excellent Service Management Indicators (X)

Indicator	Description	Mean
X1	Fast response to service requests	4.15
X2	Accuracy of service outcomes	4.18
X3	Timeliness of service completion	4.15
X4	Staff friendliness and attitude	4.20
X5	Comfort during service interaction	4.19
X6	Clarity of information provided	4.15
X7	Consistency of information among staff	4.13

The descriptive results show that staff friendliness (X4) and interaction comfort (X5) received the highest mean scores. This suggests that interpersonal aspects of service delivery are the most appreciated elements of excellent service management. In contrast, information consistency (X7) recorded the lowest mean score, indicating that students occasionally experience discrepancies in information provided by different staff members. Although still rated positively, this aspect requires managerial attention.

### *Descriptive Statistics of Administrative Service Quality*

Students' perceptions of administrative service quality were analyzed based on the SERVQUAL dimensions. The results indicate that service quality was generally perceived as good across most indicators.

Table 5. Mean Scores of Administrative Service Quality Indicators (Y)

Indicator	Description	Mean
Y1	Cleanliness and organization of the service area	4.21
Y2	Professional appearance of staff	4.19
Y3	Consistency of service delivery	4.10
Y4	Smoothness of service procedures	4.10
Y5	Staff alertness in handling requests	4.11
Y6	Responsiveness via digital platforms	3.95
Y7	Staff knowledge and competence	4.15
Y8	Genuine attention to students	4.16
Y9	Understanding of student needs	4.15

Among the SERVQUAL dimensions, tangibles emerged as the strongest, reflected in high scores for service area cleanliness and staff appearance. These findings suggest that the physical and visual elements of administrative services positively affect students' overall perceptions of service. The lowest mean score was observed for digital responsiveness (Y6). Although still within a moderate-to-high range, this result indicates that responsiveness through digital

communication channels, such as messaging applications or email, remains less optimal than face-to-face services. This finding highlights the need to strengthen digital service management to meet contemporary student expectations.

#### Regression Analysis Results

To examine the effect of excellent service management on administrative service quality, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results indicate a strong and statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Results

Component	Value	Interpretation
Constant	5.002	Intercept
Regression coefficient	1.107	Positive effect
t-value	30.665	Highly significant
p-value	< 0.001	Significant
R <sup>2</sup>	0.777	Strong explanatory power
F-value	940.3	Model significant

The regression coefficient indicates that higher levels of excellent service management are associated with higher perceptions of administrative service quality. The model explains 77.7% of the variance in administrative service quality, suggesting that excellent service management plays a substantial role in shaping students' perceptions of service quality. The high explanatory power of the model underscores the importance of managerial service practices, such as responsiveness, accuracy, clarity, and professionalism, in determining how students evaluate administrative services.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that excellent service management significantly improves administrative service quality in higher education. The regression results indicate that excellent service management explains a substantial proportion of the variance in students' perceptions of administrative service quality. This finding reinforces the growing body of literature highlighting the strategic role of managerial service practices in shaping service quality outcomes in educational institutions (Alzaydi et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Positive evaluations of service management indicators, particularly staff friendliness and comfort during interactions, highlight the importance of interpersonal competence in administrative service delivery. These findings align with contemporary service management perspectives, which argue that service quality in knowledge-based institutions is strongly influenced by relational and behavioral factors rather than by procedures alone (Osman et al., 2021). In higher education settings, administrative staff are not merely service executors but also key actors who mediate institutional policies and student experiences. When staff demonstrate empathy, professionalism, and responsiveness, students are more likely to perceive administrative services as reliable and trustworthy.

The results further reveal that information consistency received lower evaluations than other excellent service management indicators. This finding suggests that communication inconsistencies among administrative staff may undermine students' service experiences, even when other service attributes are perceived positively. Similar patterns have been observed in recent studies, which report that fragmented information flows and a lack of coordination remain persistent challenges in higher education administration (Kettunen & Kantola, 2022). These inconsistencies can create uncertainty for students and reduce confidence in administrative processes, highlighting the need for stronger internal coordination and standardized communication mechanisms (Urbain et al., 2026).

From the perspective of administrative service quality, the SERVQUAL-based analysis indicates that tangibles emerged as the strongest dimension. Clean service areas and professional

staff appearance contribute positively to students' perceptions, supporting previous findings that physical and visual cues continue to play an important role in service evaluation, even in increasingly digitalized environments (Santos et al., 2021). This suggests that investments in physical service environments remain relevant and should not be overlooked in administrative service improvement strategies.

However, the lowest mean score was observed for digital responsiveness, particularly responsiveness through messaging platforms. This finding reflects a critical issue in contemporary higher education administration. Although digital tools are widely adopted, their effective integration into service management practices remains uneven. Recent studies indicate that digital service quality depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on staff readiness, digital competence, and clear service protocols (Al-Haddad et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022). The relatively lower performance of digital responsiveness in this study suggests that excellent service management must explicitly incorporate digital service standards to meet evolving student expectations.

The strong, significant effect of excellent service management on administrative service quality confirms the theoretical assumption that service quality is not an isolated outcome but rather a result of systematic managerial practices. This finding supports contemporary service-dominant logic, which views service quality as co-created through interactions between service providers and users (Vargo & Lusch, 2021). In higher education administration, excellent service management is a critical antecedent shaping how students perceive and evaluate service interactions.

Compared to previous studies that primarily assess service quality outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2023), this research advances the literature by empirically modeling excellent service management as a measurable predictor of administrative service quality. This distinction is important because it shifts the analytical focus from descriptive assessment to explanatory analysis. By demonstrating that managerial service excellence accounts for a large proportion of perceived service quality, the study provides empirical support for integrating management-oriented constructs into service quality research in higher education.

At the institutional level, these findings carry important managerial implications. Strengthening excellent service management requires not only training staff in interpersonal skills but also ensuring consistent information delivery, clear procedures, and alignment between face-to-face and digital services. Recent governance studies emphasize that sustainable improvements in service quality in higher education depend on aligning human resource development, digital transformation, and service governance frameworks (Baporikar & Hasan, 2023; Pekkola et al., 2022). Without such alignment, service improvements may remain fragmented and fail to produce consistent student experiences.

The faculty-level focus of this study also offers a valuable contribution to the literature. While many service quality studies adopt a university-wide perspective, this research demonstrates that faculty-level administrative units constitute critical service nodes where institutional policies are enacted in everyday practice. Variations in service quality at this level can significantly shape students' overall perceptions of institutional performance. This supports recent arguments that decentralized service units deserve greater scholarly and managerial attention in higher education research (Tight, 2023).

Overall, the discussion underscores that excellent service management is a central driver of administrative service quality in higher education. The findings suggest that improving service quality requires a balanced emphasis on interpersonal competence, procedural clarity, and digital responsiveness. By empirically linking managerial service practices with SERVQUAL-based service quality outcomes, this study contributes to a more integrated understanding of how administrative services can be enhanced to support student-centered higher education.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides strong empirical evidence that excellent service management is a key determinant of administrative service quality in higher education, significantly shaping students' perceptions through responsiveness, accuracy, clarity, consistency, and professional staff behavior. It highlights that service quality is not merely the result of formal procedures but is actively constructed through everyday service interactions. Theoretically, the study contributes by positioning excellent service management as a measurable antecedent of service quality and integrating it with the SERVQUAL framework, offering a more comprehensive explanation of how managerial practices influence perceived service outcomes. Practically, the findings emphasize that improving administrative service quality requires more than infrastructure and digitalization; it demands consistent implementation of service excellence across both face-to-face and digital platforms. Addressing gaps in digital responsiveness, aligning service standards, enhancing staff competencies, and strengthening internal communication are critical to ensuring reliable and timely service delivery. The study also underscores the strategic role of faculty-level administration as the frontline of institutional service implementation. Despite limitations related to its single-faculty scope and cross-sectional design, the study offers a valuable foundation for future research and practical improvements in student-centered service management.

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