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QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMMUNICATION IN INDONESIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Nurrahmawati¹, Tresna Wiwitan², M.E. Fuady³, Obsatar Sinaga⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Faculty of Communication, Bandung Islamic University, Indonesia

Padjadjaran University

Email: [1nurrahmawati@unisba.ac.id](mailto:nurrahmawati@unisba.ac.id), [2tresna@unisba.ac.id](mailto:tresna@unisba.ac.id),

[3muhammad.efuady@unisba.ac.id](mailto:muhammad.efuady@unisba.ac.id), [4Obsatar.sinaga@unpad.ac.id](mailto:Obsatar.sinaga@unpad.ac.id)

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the quality of public service communication in three different private universities in Indonesia within the process of new student admission. To collect the data, this qualitative phenomenological study used in-depth interviews and observation to both committee members of the student admissions and future students. In light of the information investigation, it was discovered that there are some positive and negative experiences of the nature of open administration correspondence of the private colleges during the time spent new understudy affirmation. In general, all the studies universities have shown good non-verbal communication. However, they are in need of improving the quality of verbal communication particularly those related with comprehensible information and hospitality. It is expected that the results of this study have a good impact for other private universities in Indonesia to improve their quality of public service communication possibly leading to the quality of their universities.

INTRODUCTION

Quality of services in private universities is something inevitable to maintain business. Private universities should be able to maintain good quality of both academic and administrative affairs (Tshuma & Ndebele, 2017);(Simon, 2014); (Naidoo & Mutinta, 2017); (Marimon, Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent, & Llach, 2019). In addition, the service quality should be a team work of parties involved (Diedericks, Klerk, & Bevan-Dye, 2017). There have been studies on the quality of services in private universities; some of which

are related to the relationship among service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty (Lion, Oni, & Fatoki, 2016); (Diedericks et al., 2017).

In Indonesia, there are 4,186 private universities (Rijal, 2018) in need of good maintenance of quality to compete with one another to be able to give excellent services to their future students. There have been several studies supporting the idea that good quality services have a significant impact towards their students' satisfaction, images, and loyalty (Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair, & Ragavan, 2016); (Ahmadinejad, Karampour, & Nazari, 2016);(Nurrahmawati, Wiwitan, & Fuady, 2019). However, there are a few of them discussing the aspects of SWOT, ethical performance, and complain handling in private universities. Those issues drew the attention of the researchers to fill the research gap particularly in relation to public service communication in new student admission in private universities. This study is also initiated with SWTO analysis in serving new students so that there will be feedback and parameters facing the complexity of better public service communication in private universities (Bull et al., 2016), (Leiber, Stensaker, & Harvey, 2018).

In general, this study aims to describe the SWOT analysis, ethical performance, and complaint handling in the context of public service communication in private universities' student admission.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into four dimensions of studies. First, it is related to public service communication. Second, the issues and concepts of SWOT will also be highlighted. Third, the ethical performance is also discussed, and fourth, strategies to handle complaints in private universities are also going to be reviewed.

Concepts of public service communication

Public services are closely related to communication activities in which each party involved gives benefits to each other in a variety of contexts, including education. One of the goals is to create good quality which aims to fulfill the public needs. In addition, quality can also be defined as professional performance which primarily works to fulfill people's basic needs in a form of services, both manual services and e-services (Teeluckdharry, 2008): (Kenyon & Sen, 2015). (Kenyon & Sen, 2015); (Carlson & O'Cass, 2010), (Ang & Buttle, 2012).

SWOT Analysis in educational services

A SWOT analysis is commonly implemented in studies of external and internal environments (Gregory, 2010:58). It is also understood as environmental monitoring and scanning. The first two aspects of the analysis, strengths and weaknesses, are factors triggered internally while the other two factors, opportunities and threats, are external. The analysis is also a good tool to speculate business (Robbins & Mary Coulter, 2012).

In this study, the SWOT analysis is conducted in an attempt to see the opportunities and challenges of public service communication in the context of new student admission in private universities. The analysis is also intended to see which aspects to keep and which ones to remove (Leiber et al., 2018).

Concepts of ethical performance

Ethical performance is related to the theory of self-presentation (Schein, 2011). It is assumed that one is presenting their images when interacting (Lane & Penguin, 1969). This is what is so called impression management which comprises techniques used by actors to have certain impressions in certain moments. This also means that we need to manage information we share with others and the influence it brings. In terms of communication, this indicates that we treat others the way we want others to treat us.

There are three categories of self-presentation including ingratiation (Andrzejewski & Mooney, 2016), self-promotion, and exemplification (Stephen W. Littlejohn Karen A. Foss, 2009). Ingratiation means pure friendliness while self-promotion has something to do with showing competencies, pursuing achievements, joining positive activities and organizations. Last but not least, exemplification usually demonstrates abilities, strengths, integrity, and organizational values. In this study, the self-presentation is reflected by the private universities in the process of student new admission.

Strategies of complain handling

There are several types of complaints. First of all, the complaints which refer to technical issues. Moreover, there are complaints due to the negative behaviors of the public officials, complaints towards unsatisfying services, complaints which are staged, and complaints due to unhappy costumers (Daryanto & Setyobudi ,2014, (Moon, Wei, & Miao, 2019), (Giry, 2016), (Partap, 2019).

There are two factors in relation to strategies of complaint management: factors related responses to the customers and factors of organizational learning. Those factors can help handle complaints effectively and efficiently so that customer satisfaction can be achieved (Yilmaz, Varnali, & Kasnakoglu, 2016)

METHOD

This study used a phenomenology method with a qualitative approach aiming at investigating the quality of public service communication in terms of SWOT analysis, ethical performance, and handling complaints) within the process of new student admission promotion in three different private universities in Indonesia located in Jakarta, Bandung, and Cirebon. Those three universities were purposively selected to represent public and Islamic universities. Moreover, the three universities also represented different accreditation levels by Indonesia National Higher Education Accreditation

Board. University A was accredited A, University B was accredited B, and University C was accredited C. However, in the middle of the research process, the University B was re-assessed and received an A so that the three universities were representing A and C. The study was conducted in the 2017 admission of new students.

To collect the data, we used three different instruments including an in-depth interview, observation, and document study. The interview was administered to informants with good understanding and direct involvement in the activity of new student admission consisting of the committee chairs and members of the admission, rectors, vice rectors on academic affairs (which were usually the committee chairs as well), and two prospective students. We had an unstructured interview in the form of face-to-face informal conversation. The interview took place for two sessions in which each session lasted for around two hours. The questions on SWOT related to the quality of communication in public services contained aspects of strengths and weakness as triggering factors influencing the institution directly. The other two elements, opportunities and threats, had more external values and impacts. Questions related to the ethical performance mainly discussed how ethics were included into the whole process of the communication started from how to serve the public to how to deal with negativities in public services. Last but not least, questions on handling complaints had everything to do with the source of complaints, responses to complaints, and standards of complaint handling.

An analytical observation on how the communication on the admission of new students was conducted. The communication studied was either verbal and non-verbal. To record what occurred during the observation, note-taking and observation checklist were performed (...). The last instrument used was document study comprising documents of website, brochures, and profile books of the universities.

Research procedure

After the data were collected, we aggregated, organized, and classified them into units. Aggregation aimed to transform specific issues into general ones to find out the general pattern of the data. The data were then organized into categories. After that, there were refinement and reinforcement for revisions.

Data validity technique

To make sure that the data collected were internally valid, we triangulated all the data acquired from all the instruments used. We also had discussions with experts to confirm the interpretive meanings based on the results of our study. Additionally, we also did member checking where we gave back the results to the informants for them to confirm and clarify. The member checking was administered only to the committee chairs and members; the prospective students were not checked since they both lived out of town.

RESULTS

The results of the study were obtained from in-depth interviews with the committee member of the new student admission in three private universities in West Java namely University A, University B, and University C.

Results of the SWOT analysis in university A

Some of the strengths of this university are its popularity, accreditation, good human resources and technology use, and good quality facilities. Established in 1981, the university has buildings in 16 different locations all with good facilities. In terms of the use of technology, the university gives their students gadget made by the university so that they can blast information needed by the students anytime. The optimum use of technology leads to easy access of students' grade and attracts their future students easily. The committee members of the new student admission are mostly students so that they have relatively equal points of view with the student candidates. In addition, the committee members also still remember how it feels to register as new students.

University A also has several weaknesses in this case. First of all, like what is faced by other private universities, they have to compete with state universities subsidized by the government. In addition, this leads to the long time and huge energy and cost of student admission for private universities. In private universities, services are open almost every day; weekdays, weekend, and national holidays.

Even through state universities may cause some problems they also might give an opportunity to private universities. It is known that the number of students accepted to the state universities is very limited meaning that private universities can determine their own quota of student admission.

The respondents show quite good confidence that there will not by any threat as long as everything is managed well. What they face is healthy competition rather than a threat.

Results of SWOT analysis in university B

One of the ultimate strengths of the university is the Islamic concepts of the admission as it is an Islamic university as well. Therefore, the approached used is human relations. However, mass media and social media are also optimally used to publish information on student admission. Another strength of the university is its location which is strategic.

On the other hand, the biggest weakness owned by the university is related to the committee. Some of the members do not actually understand their tasks so

that sometimes they get confused in the field. In addition, the divisions of the committee are also not effective because some of the committee members are active teaching and non-teaching staff of the university who also have to fulfill their duty as lecturers and administrative staff and at the same time work as new student admission committee members.

Some of the opportunities this university has are its popularity due to its Islamic concepts of education and national and international collaborations which are good things for their students to develop.

The existence of state and international universities are two of the biggest threats university B has because both are usually the biggest factors of students not wanting or cancelling to register to the university.

Results of SWOT analysis in university C

The first strength of the university is related to their academic staff which has high standards. In addition, they also have attachment with one community namely *Muhammadiyah* so that students coming from the community are easier to be invited to join the university. However, the university lacks financial support which leads to its weakness. Following this, the fact that most of the human resources do not have good awareness of recruiting new students is also another weakness of the university. The incomprehensive understanding of *Muhammadiyah* also becomes another contributor of its weakness. The university has a good opportunity of having more students since it keeps developing its infrastructure. Additionally, the biggest threat faced by the university is that conflict of interest of several students who take advantage out of the process of the student new admission managed by the university.

Ethical performance of each university

In university A, the ethical performance is classified good since they show good and interesting performance. They do normal gesture and have positive attitude. Most importantly, they give clear and complete information whenever they communicate.

Based on the results of an interview with university B's future students, it is found that the online method of communication is effective because students living far from campus do not have to come for registration. They are just required to come to the campus for the enrolment test. In terms of non-verbal communication, the committee members wear their uniform on every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and in verbal communication point of view, most of the members perform well. However, there are some people who show bad attitude when communicating.

In terms of the system, university shows good points. Carrying out a one-day service, the university succeeds in giving good impressions to their future students since they can do everything they need to in one day. For instance, once they finish a certain test, they will know the results right away. However,

what come to be an issue is their facilities. Most of the future students complain that they do not have decent places for the whole processes of the new student admission.

Complaint handling in each university

It is acknowledged by both the committee and the future students of university A that the most frequently found complaint is related to the complete information conveyed. For instance, information on cashback of tuition is not delivered well by all the committee members. In fact, this is the key to good public service communication.

The biggest complaint in university B, in the meantime, is about the online registration in which the internet network of the university is not good and there tends to always be late data input from the bank to the information center of the university so that the students are late to have their usernames and passwords.

In university C, the most frequently conveyed complaint is about the location of registration. They think it is not ideal at all. When handling complaints, the first layer usually consists of front desk clerks. If they give up, others like the vice rector or the chairperson of the admission will take part.

DISCUSSION

This study investigates the quality of public service communication in three different private universities in Indonesia. It is believed that universities need to have innovative and creative ways in sharing information with stakeholders, which indirectly promote the institutions' positive image (Mr, 2010). The results showed that even though the strengths of each university are different, they actually have similarities in terms of easily accessible locations, their uniqueness, and positioning of each university (Chen, Nguyen, Melewar, & Dennis, 2017). It has also been revealed that the opportunity of private universities is quite high due to the limited number of students accepted in state universities. In addition, some special features such as Islamic concepts of a university is a good attractive factor since 87 % of Indonesian citizens are Muslims (Widyaningrum & Yu, 2018). The weaknesses of public service communication in the three studies universities are in line with a study stating that it usually is related to members lacking in information mastery, limited experiences, and non-optimum services (Jumoke, 2014). Another significant weakness is also on registration where some universities still do not implement online registration (Carlson & O'Cass, 2010), (Partap, 2019). In terms of threats, the three studies universities share the same opinion that their main competitors are international private universities and state universities opening up a branch in remote areas due to the ASEAN Economic Society. The complete results of SWOT analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table1. Results of SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis	University A	University B	University C
Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional Accreditation - Popularity - The use of technology - Good management of student admission - Committee members are students - Easily accessible location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Islamic concepts - Promoting honesty - Human relations approach - Strategic location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muhammadiyah-minded - Synergy with the central organizations of Muhammadiyah - One-day service approach - Collaboration with regional government
Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Length of student admission duration - Non optimum performance of the committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ineffective committee structure - Some committee members are lack of understanding the student admission information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conventional registration - Lack of facilities - Limited budgeting - Human resources in need of upgrading
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High number of registrants - Limited quota of state university students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People's trust on Islamic education - National and international collaborations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration with Muhammadiyah universities in Indonesia - People's trust towards Muhammadiyah - Campus infrastructure development
Threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competition with fellow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People's assumptions that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People's assumptions that

	private universities	state universities are better than private ones - State universities opening up branches in remote areas - Private universities collaborating with international institutions	state universities are better than private ones - Too much burden of work for either teaching or non-teaching staff
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In terms of ethical performance, the three universities have shown good verbal and non-verbal communication, open communication, and empathetic communication. The information is delivered clearly, completely, and in details. Each university expects that there is zero complain. This is in good agreement with literature that there is positive correlation between the quality of public service and university image attracting more people to sign up and invite others to sign up (Fen, Assistant, Assistant, & Management, 2019). However, it has been proven that some of the committee members show lack of required criteria and uniformity of information delivery. Some others even do not have an ability to use the technology provided (Jumoke, 2014) (Adekoya, 2015). Studies have highlighted that so far, the university has shown good non-verbal communication yet needs to improve the quality of their verbal communication (Afkhami, Tajafari, Mohsen Nowkarizi, & Seyyed Mohsen Asghari Nekah, 2019). The complete explanation of ethical performance in each university is discussed in Table 2.

Table3. Ethical Performance of Public Service Communication in Each University

No.	University A	University B	University C
1.	- Normal non-verbal communication - Empathetic communication	Maximized verbal and non-verbal communication	- Open communication - Empathetic communication
2.	Positive attitudes	Communication with heart	One day service method
3,	Clear, complete, and detailed information	Open information	Zero complain service

In relation to complain handling, the results of this study show resemblance with previous studies that some of the strategies in doing so are by open and face to face communication, good coordination, and explanation (Tata & Rhodes, 1996). More detailed information on complain handling of the three universities is discussed in Table 3.

Table2. Complain Handling in the Three Universities

Handling Complain	University A	University B	University C
Type of complain	Lack of information	- Difficult to upload - Late to input data	Non-representative place
Type of communication	Interpersonal communication	Interpersonal communication	Interpersonal communication
Way of communication	Open communication	Coordination	Explanation
Process of communication	Complains → Members of the service coordination team	Complains → Information center → Other units	Complains → Front desk → Chairman of the committee and team

Table 3 shows that there are complains related to lack of information, technical issues, facility issues, and constraints on online networking and difficult access to the location (Dika, Sunday Ikhimeakhu, 2019), (Juliet Onuoha, 2019). The process of communication in handling complains are well built among the committee members. However, it is not optimum to the heads of the universities. In fact, there needs to be policies made related to this so that there will be optimum service of communication (Ang & Buttle, 2012). This study is believed to give contribution to the existing literature especially those related to qualitative studies on public service communication (Budiwan & Efendi, 2016). There are new insights introduced namely SWOT analysis, ethical performance, and complain handling.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the results of the study are a good contribution for both theoretical and practical implication. In terms of theories, this study is expected to give enrichment to the literature particularly those related to public service communication. Meanwhile, in the practical implication, it is expected that policy makers are aware of the issues discussed here and agree to make policies related to the issues. For future researchers, it is recommended they have more samples of both private and state universities to have better standards of the public service communication. In addition, it is also suggested that future studies add such important aspects as good human resources and quantitative research method to have more comprehensive results.

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