# Service Quality Dimensions in Public Library: Nothern Area Experienced

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**Abstract: Problem statement:** Service quality has emerged as a key strategic issue in management. The service quality assessment tool SERVQUAL was introduced the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness and assurance and empathy dimensions of service quality. **Approach:** The objective of this study is to investigate which service quality dimensions that mostly influenced the service quality in public library in Sungai Petani. The study was conducted among library users and the information was gathered via questionnaires which consisted of structured questions. In this study, simple random sampling was used where only 132 respondents were selected. The discussion methods are using the Descriptive Statistic and Multiple Regressions used to analyze the result of this study. **Results:** The findings indicated that all three hypotheses which are tangible dimension, reliability dimension and responsiveness dimension was accepted by the researchers. Based on the finding, the reliability dimension is a significant with service quality in public library Sungai Petani which is mostly influenced user's in using the services. However the researchers recommend that the management of public library Sungai Petani needs to focus on several services that needs further improvement such as the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and welcoming atmosphere is important part of providing excellent services towards modern library service. **Conclusion:** In future research, the library's management should take an effort to create the pleasant surroundings to encourage the widest possible segment of the population to use the library and to regard it as an essential part of community life and more 'user friendly' with the customers.

**Keywords:** Service quality, public library, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), quality dimensions, empathy dimensions

## INTRODUCTION

The service quality is very important to be practices in public library services because the users satisfaction in based on the quality of service that they received. Service quality will lead to customer satisfaction. The concept of service quality in library was defined as the difference between library user's expectations and perceptions towards service performance (Nejati and Nejati, 2008). Based on this definition, the service quality is about what public library users received from public library services that leads to their behavior and satisfactory towards the services whether it is good or bad. The public library is a library which is available and accessible to all regardless of age, skill level, or ability to pay. Public library is different from other library such as school library and academic library in term of the service that serves the public with the information generally. In Malaysia, every state has public libraries that manage by Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Negeri and cooperate with local government respectively. In Kedah state, there are 10 main branches of public libraries in every district under the management of Perbadanan

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Perpustakaan Awam Negeri Kedah. In this study, the researcher's just focus on the public library in Sungai Petani that located at Jalan Pegawai and nearest of Jubli Intan Park in the area of Bandar Sungai Petani. Public library Sungai Petani is a branch that officially start operated on April 1997. Public library Sungai Petani provides services such as books circulations, journals and article, internet access for relevant information, multimedia materials and handles many programs that related to reading activities. It received around two hundred to four hundred visitors a day from all level of age and races

Many studies have been carried out towards service quality in public libraries. Unfortunately, not so many researches have been studied in Malaysia even public libraries provided in every single state government. The services that provided by public libraries are still needs of improvement to fulfill the users satisfaction. By using the service quality assessment tool SERVQUAL introduced by Parasuraman *et al*. (1988) that cover tangibles, reliability and responsiveness dimensions of service quality dimensions will give benefits to the researchers. By having the result of findings and recommendations will get a value added in identifying and solving the pattern of service quality among Malaysian This result will provide relevant information for the government to improvise in service quality dimensions. The results from this research also can identify the level of tangibles, reliability and responsiveness of local people towards service quality which is can change the mentality of Malaysian readers towards public libraries up to the standard as it. Thus, the objectives of this research is to investigate which service quality dimensions that mostly influenced the service quality in public library in Sungai Petani

**Problem statement:** The state governments needed to create more permanent post for public librarians, adding that the lack of staff was the most pressing problems facing the libraries. Datin Paduka Shahaneem Hanoum, chairman of the Council of Public State Libraries Directors, said the lack of qualified staff at state and district libraries had limited their activities. This report shows that public library facing problem in term of qualified staff to serve quality service to the public library users. The reliability and responsiveness dimension of service quality rely on personnel or staff of the public library. The attitude and the mentality of public library staff needs to change in order to make public libraries more proactive as a centre of education, culture and recreation in local community. The physical space and the facilities in public libraries need to be change and improve to support this plan. This statement

shows that the personnel of the public libraries are the important element that needs to focus on as a major challenge to determine good service quality of public library.

The Regional Conference on Public Libraries Malaysia in 1997 was emphasized on the importance of making public libraries user friendly and the need to attract children and young people. The problems in the plan action includes the objectives and role of public libraries that consists of vision, mission and objectives that need to redefine with the role in relation to local community needs in urban and rural areas. The needs to setting standards and guideline for public libraries in order to monitor assess and identify opportunities for improvement of collections and service provided (IFLA Regional Conference on Public Libraries Malaysia, 1997).

The collection of reading materials in public libraries needs to be more quality to make people love to reads. Many people depending on public library to have reading materials such as books that they are unable to have it. According to Datuk Zawiyah Baba, the former director of National Library, the collections of public libraries in very poor condition, the main factors that contribute to this situation are the lack of priority by the authorities and insufficient of funds to support public libraries.

The Park Ridge Public Library in America reveals the current physical facility presents major challenges to the library. The lacks sufficient space to meet the needs of the community limits the library's to increase its collections without reducing other collections, provide adequate space for children and teens and provide quite space for the library users. Furthermore, the library also not able to offer separate programs to serve different segments of the community and not able to provide adequate workplace for staff. The strategic plans also cover on staffing challenge, it is about the needs to employ and support a knowledgeable, flexible and equitably compensated staff team that can respond positively and creatively to the changing public library environment.

The service quality is about customer's long term, cognitive evaluations of a firm's service delivery and the service quality is determination of satisfaction among the public library's users. The SERVQUAL is a standardized scale that measures expectations and perceptions about critical quality dimension.

**Literature review:** The service quality is very important to be practices in public library services because the users satisfaction in based on the quality of service that they received. Service quality will lead to

customer satisfaction. The concept of service quality in library was defined as the difference between library user's expectations and perceptions towards service performance (Nejati and Nejati, 2008; Oldman and Wills, 1977). Based on this definition, the service quality is about what public library users received from public library services that leads to their behavior and satisfactory towards the services whether it is good or bad. Based on the research by Marshall *et al*. (1998), indicate that service quality can be achieve through understanding all aspects of service that important and meet users needs. According to Usherwood and Sobczyk (1997), the number of public library users are high when the service that provided is in great value, enhancing quality of life and can fulfilling an essential need for majority of library users. To achieve the service quality, service that delivered to the users must be in the right way, good manner in overall aspects and can gives something that valued for them. In the other words, a quality service is means as fully meets the expectations and requirements of the users (Sharma cited by Sahu, 2007). In the article of Service Quality Dimension a Study on Various Sizes of Grocery Retailers by Abu (2004), that used physical aspects, reliability, interpersonal relationship, problem solving and policy in service quality dimensions to measured service quality on various sizes of grocery retailers based on previous studies. The study finding indicate that the physical aspects and inter-personal relationship dimensions contribute significantly to the overall service quality in a medium sized grocery store. The overall service quality measure for a large size grocery retailer significantly determine by the physical aspect, reliability and policy dimensions. This finding shows that the customer's satisfaction can lead by the appearance of physical aspects such as the interior environment that safety, clean and well manage. The Measurement of Service Quality: A new P-C-P attributes model is an article by Philip and Hazlett (1997) discussed on the management and evaluation of service quality in service sector. In the attributes model, they adopted some of questions that relating to dimensions from original SERVQUAL scale. The issue such as responsiveness of the staff delivers the service to the customer; it is about how staff response to the customer queries for help including prompt service and individual attentions are addressed. The article of service quality at University of Tehran Central Library by Nejati and Nejati (2008), investigate the importance of service quality aspects from the user's perspective. The SERVPERF methodology was used to measure service quality in University of Tehran Central Library. The reliability aspect of service was measured that

refers to the delivery of service as dependability and accuracy (Nejati and Nejati, 2008; Parasuraman *et al*., 1988). The research finding indicate the most important aspect of service quality identified by users of University of Tehran Central Library are the availability of computer terminals without excessive waiting, service at circulation desk and keeping records consistent with actual status. The Hypotheses of the study is There is a significant difference between dimension of tangible and service quality on the public library in Sungai Petani, there is a significant difference between dimension of reliability and service quality on the public library in Sungai Petani and There is a significant difference between dimension of responsiveness and service quality on the public library in Sungai Petani.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in Sungai Petani Public Library from July 2008 until April 2009 using a quantitative towards respondents. A total of 132 respondents were selected as respondents due to larger size of population. The data was analyzed using statistical Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) in getting data and information. By this SPSS, the researchers used the analysis method like Descriptive Statistic and Multiple Regressions.

## RESULTS

**Profile of respondents:** In this study, the researchers discuss about the respondents demographic such as gender, age, marital status, race, monthly salary and level of education. Based on the Table 1, majority of the respondents are female which representing 57.6% (n = 76). Meanwhile, males are the minority which representing 42.4% (n = 56).

In the Table 2, majority of the respondents are Malay which representing 78% (n = 108), 9.1 % (n = 12) representing Chinese respondents and 12.9 (n = 17) representing Indian respondents.

Based on the Table 3, majority of the respondents are single which representing 60.6% (n = 80). Meanwhile 39.4 % (n = 52) of the respondents are married.

As indicated in Table 4, Respondents are categorized into five age groups which range from less than 25 years old, 25-35 years old, 36-45 years old, 46-55 years old and more than 56 years old. From the Table 4, majority of the respondents' age are less than 25 old which representing 54.5% (n = 72), followed by 24.2% (n = 32) under group of 36-45 years old, 16.7% (n = 22) under group 25-35, 2.3% (n = 3) under both group of 46-55 years old more than 56 years old.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 56 | 42.4 |
| Female | 76 | 57.6 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

Table 2: Race of respondents

| Race | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Malay | 103 | 78.0 |
| Chinese | 12 | 9.1 |
| Indian | 17 | 12.9 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

Table 3: Marital status of respondents

| Marital status | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Single | 80 | 60.6 |
| Married | 52 | 39.4 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

Table 4: Age of respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| <25 years | 72 | 54.5 |
| 25-35 years | 22 | 16.7 |
| 36-45 years | 32 | 24.2 |
| 46-55 years | 3 | 2.3 |
| >56 years | 3 | 2.3 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

Table 5: Education levels

| Education levels | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| PMR | 31 | 23.5 |
| SPM/STPM | 47 | 35.6 |
| Diploma | 11 | 8.3 |
| Degree | 35 | 26.5 |
| Masters | 1 | 0.8 |
| Others | 7 | 5.3 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

In the Table 5, majority of the respondents' education level are SPM/STPM level which representing 53.6% (n = 47), 26.5% (n = 35) representing Degree level, 23.5% (n = 31) representing PMR level, 8.3% (n = 11) representing Diploma level, 5.3% (n = 7) representing others and o.8% (n = 1) representing Master Degree.

As indicated in the Table 6, most of the respondents' occupation are students representing 55.3% (n=73), followed by government sector representing 16.7% (n = 22). Meanwhile the other occupation is from business representing 12.9% (n = 17), followed by occupation in private sector representing 10.6% (n = 14) and others representing 4.5% (n = 6).

Based on the Table 7, frequency users go to library is most of them is sometimes which is representing 53% (n = 70), followed by always go to library representing 25% (n = 33) and 22% (n = 29) users are seldom go to library.

Table 6: Occupations

| Occupations | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Government sector | 22 | 16.7 |
| Private Sector | 14 | 10.6 |
| Business | 17 | 12.9 |
| Students | 73 | 55.3 |
| Others | 6 | 4.5 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

Table 7: Frequency users go to library

| Frequency | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Always | 33 | 25.0 |
| Sometimes | 70 | 53.0 |
| Seldom | 29 | 22.0 |
| Total | 132 | 100.0 |

Table 8: Main reasons go to library

| Reasons | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Borrow/return books | 7 | 5.3 |
| Find information | 76 | 57.6 |
| Using internet | 3 | 2.3 |
| Study | 35 | 26.5 |
| Others | 11 | 8.3 |
| Total | 183 | 100.0 |

Table 9: Model summary

| Mode | R | $R^2$ Square | Adjusted $R^2$ | Std. error of the estimat |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.898(a) | 0.806 | 0.802 | 1.77590 |

aPredictors: (Constant), responsiveness dimensions, tangible dimensions and reliability dimensions

In Table 8, the main reason the respondents go to library because to find information representing 57.6% (n = 76), followed by reason to study representing 26.5% (n = 35). Meanwhile, the others reason why they go to library representing 8.3% (n = 11) and go to library because to borrow or return of books representing 5.3% (n = 7). The last reason why they go to library because to using internet representing 2.3% (n = 3).

**Result of findings:** The result from Multiple Regressions analysis is an equation that shows an extension of bivariate correlation and used when the independent variables are correlated with one another and with dependent variable. Table 9 is the summary of three independent variables that are entered into the regression model. R (0.898) is the value for correlation of the three independent variables with the dependent variable, after all the inter correlation among the three independent variables are taken into account. The R Square (0.806), which is the explained variance, is actually the square of the multiple R (0.898).

In the ANOVA Table 10 shows that the F value of 177.772 is significant at the 0.000 level. In the df (defree of freedom) in the Table 10, the first number

Table 10: ANOVA (b)

| Model | | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 1681.972 | 3 | 560.657 | 177.772 | 0.000(a) |
| | Residual | 403.687 | 128 | 3.154 | | |
| | Total | 2085.659 | 131 | | | |

A: Predictors: (Constant), responsiveness dimensions, tangible dimensions, reliability dimensions; b: Dependent variable: Service quality

Table 11: Coefficients (a)

| Model | | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. error | Beta | B | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.078 | 0.933 | | 2.227 | 0.028 |
| | Tangible dimensions | 0.323 | 0.062 | 0.300 | 5.231 | 0.000 |
| | Reliability dimensions | 0.205 | 0.052 | 0.265 | 3.969 | 0.000 |
| | Responsiveness dimensions | 0.367 | 0.052 | 0.433 | 7.000 | 0.000 |

a: Dependent variable: Service quality

represents the number of independent variables (3), the second number (128) is the total number of complete responses for all the variables in the equation (N), minus the number of independent variables (K) minus 1. (N-K-1) [(132-3-1) = 128]. The F statistic produced (F = 177.772) is significant at the 0.000 level.

Table 11 helps the researchers to see which between three variables influence most the variance in service quality. The column Beta under Standard Coefficients, the researchers found the highest number in the beta is 0.433 for responsiveness dimension, which is this independent variable, is significant at the 0.000 level.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings under tangible dimension, the researchers determined that there is a correlation between tangible dimension and service quality. The finding exhibited that the service quality can lead by the appearance of physical aspects such as the interior environment that safety, clean and well manages. Under reliability dimension, the researchers determined that there is a correlation between reliability dimension and service quality. The finding exhibited that the service quality can lead by the service at circulation desk and keeping records consistent with actual status. The study also determined that there is a correlation between responsiveness dimension and service quality. The finding exhibited that the service quality can lead by the library staff always put full effort to provide library users with the right information in the right time. Recommended by the study can be noted by all government agencies especially public libraries in open and welcoming atmosphere in providing excellent services towards modern library service. The library's management should take an effort to create the pleasant surroundings to encourage the widest possible segment of the population to use the library and to regard it as an essential part of community life.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researchers conclude that prime objective in this study which is to investigate which service quality dimensions that mostly influenced the service quality in public library in Sungai Petani have been answered by this research. For the future research, the assessments on service quality in public library Sungai Petani should cover all five dimensions including assurance dimension and empathy dimension to more transparent in providing their services.

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