



**INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITY OF
SERVICES PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SATISFACTION**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the quality of service provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction. A survey questionnaire research was used to collect data from 278 international students using purposive sampling techniques. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was employed to determine the relationship between the quality of services provided and international students' satisfaction. The dimensions used for quality of services are faculty support, administrative service, physical evidence, language fluency, and academic service. Based on the correlation results, a positive relationship was found between faculty support and international students' satisfaction with $r = .71$ significant at $P < 0.05$. The findings also showed the relationship between administrative service and international students' satisfaction with $r = .64$ and $P < 0.05$, between physical evidence and international students with $r = .69$ and $P < 0.05$, language fluency and international students with $r = -.106$ and $P > 0.05$ and academic service and international students with $r = .59$ and $P < 0.05$. In conclusion, faculty support, administrative service, physical evidence and academic service gives satisfaction for international students in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, while language fluency does not have a relationship with international students. The implication of this study suggested that the university community should increase the service to be given to international students in order to make their stay meaningful. However, further investigation should be conducted into other factors that potentially affect international students.



MENYIASAT HUBUNGAN ANTARA KUALITI PERKHIDMATAN DAN KEPUASAN PELAJAR ANTARABANGSA UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

ABSTRAK

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat hubungan antara kualiti perkhidmatan dengan kepuasan pelajar antarabangsa di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. Kajian ini menggunakan soal selidik melibatkan responden seramai 278 pelajar antarabangsa dengan menggunakan teknik pensampelan secara bertujuan. Analisis data menggunakan pekali korelasi Pearson untuk menunjukkan hubungan antara kualiti perkhidmatan dan kepuasan pelajar antarabangsa. Dimensi yang digunakan untuk kualiti perkhidmatan adalah sokongan fakulti, perkhidmatan pentadbiran, bukti fizikal, kelancaran bahasa dan perkhidmatan akademik. Dapatan korelasi menunjukkan terdapat hubungan yang positif antara sokongan fakulti dan kepuasan pelajar antarabangsa dengan $r = 0.71$ iaitu signifikan pada $P < 0.05$. Hasil kajian ini juga menunjukkan terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara perkhidmatan pentadbiran dan kepuasan pelajar antarabangsa dengan $r = .64$ dan $P < 0.05$, hubungan signifikan antara bukti fizikal dan pelajar antarabangsa dengan $r = .69$ dan $P < 0.05$, hubungan yang tidak signifikan antara kelancaran bahasa dan pelajar antarabangsa dengan $r = -.106$ di mana $P > 0.05$ dan hubungan signifikan antara perkhidmatan akademik dan pelajar antarabangsa dengan $r = 0.59$ dan $P < 0.05$. Sebagai kesimpulan, sokongan fakulti, perkhidmatan pentadbiran, bukti fizikal dan perkhidmatan akademik memberikan kepuasan kepada pelajar antarabangsa. Namun begitu, bagi faktor kelancaran bahasa tidak menunjukkan hubungan dengan kepuasan pelajar antarabangsa di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. Implikasi kajian ini mencadangkan agar komuniti universiti dapat meningkatkan lagi kualiti perkhidmatan kepada pelajar antarabangsa. Kajian ini juga turut mencadangkan agar penyelidik akan datang dapat menjalankan penyelidikan dengan menambahkan lagi faktor-faktor lain yang mungkin memberi kesan kepada pelajar antarabangsa.





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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PhD Doctor of Philosophy

SAC Student as Customer

UPSI Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Students are viewed in the international economy or market as customers whose penchant for high quality of services cannot be over emphasized through the buying of products bought by higher institutions of learning (Elhamouby, 2016). It would be necessary for customers to have a taste of the product purchased before it can assess its quality. According to Parasuraman (1998) customer satisfaction could only be assessed in evaluating the quality received. This chapter demonstrates a brief introduction investigating the relationship between international student satisfaction and quality of service provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. It defines the meaning and concept and importance of international student satisfactions and portrays a current



scenario of international student satisfactions in higher educational organizations in Malaysia, the chosen sector of this study. This chapter also discusses the problem statements, objectives of this study, research question as well the significance of this study. Finally, this chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the limitation of this study along with the operational definition of the chosen topic.

1.2 Background of the Study

Education sector is one of the emerging earning sources of foreign exchange in Malaysia.(Verbik, L. & Lasanowski, V. 2007). International student mobility: Patterns and trends. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, UK (September). World of Education News and Reviews (WENR) 20(5), May 2007. World of Education News and Reviews (WENR) 20(11), November/December 2007. It's a growing earning sector for Malaysia government and more earning is possible if the government patronizes the sector. Garrett (2014) explained that several countries have set their plans to attract the foreign students from global aspects. Universities all over the world have set aside the proper management of the international students' population in focus. This is because the thinking faculty of these international students are of paramount importance to the higher institution of learning and government (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Sultana & Momen, 2017). For example, Japan has announced their plans to enrol 300,000 foreign students by the year 2020 when Canada sets their target to enrol double foreign students in the next decade (University World News, CBC News; 2014). This is the strategy developed by Canada to attract more international students. In another





development, China sets their goal to enrol 200,000 to 500,000 foreign students by the year 2020 while the US has increased 70% foreign student enrolment in the past decades (UNESCO 2013; Garrett 2014).

Furthermore, Malaysia have announced their plan to enrol 200,000 foreign students by the year 2020 which were 90,000 in 2013 (MOHE, 2013). However, the educational sector can enhance the national economic growth rate by enrolling more international students (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Basha, Sweeney, & Soutar, 2016; Singh, 2016). Based on this notion, universities in Malaysia had devised methods of enrol international students. On the other hand, students' satisfaction of educational organizations have become a source of income for host universities to survive (Hasan & Masri, 2013; Basha, Sweeney & Soutar, 2016).



Hasan and Masri (2013) explained that as international students satisfaction is the main core of universities and it has become a topical topic among the scholars. Customers' satisfaction measures the service quality received from the providers (Lassar, Mmanolis & Winsor, 2000; Bowen, 2018). It is because of service provided by the organization that entices some customers. In addition to this notion, students are the main customers in the educational institute (Sakthivel et al. 2005; Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair, & Ragavan, 2016; Shahijan, Rezaei, & Amin, 2016). Universities should consider students' satisfaction as their major concern because of the internal competition among others universities, students' increased expectation towards the universities and the classification of education as a marketable service (Ling et al. 2010;





Shafaei, Abd Razak, & Nejati, 2016). Therefore, satisfaction of students should be of paramount to universities having international students.

For the quality of the service, it will be imperative to use the service quality paradigm to determine students' satisfaction. The study would be best explanatory to fully comprehend the concepts like student/customer satisfaction and opinion on service quality of the higher institution of learning. Satisfy students is essential for an institute because it brings several benefits for educational institutions. In line with Abu Hassan (2008) expressed that students like the quality of service received by university apart from teaching in higher education. When students are considered as major customers to higher institutions, they tend to bring more students to the school (Yakunina et'al, 2013). Most of the researchers posted that quality service provided in the universities lead to international students' satisfaction. (Braun & Zolfagharian, 2016)

According to Katircioglu et al. (2012) educational institutes should focus on their student satisfaction because satisfied students not only increase institute reputation by promoting positive word of mouth but also contribute to the institute success in several ways such as academic contribution, financial contribution. (Huang and Wang) (2012) stressed that satisfaction of a student means his positive attitude or perception towards the learning activities of the institute. They further described that satisfied students mean those students who are happy with their studies or adopts an aggressive learning attitude. In another development, Chen (2012) explained that students' satisfaction is an emotional complex of a student and level of pleasure of a student





experiences in the school may lead to effective learning outcome. On the other hand, Gibbons et al. (2011) described that students feel satisfied when their real experience fulfills their expectation and they feel unsatisfied when their real experience doesn't equal his expectations or under his expectations. Psychologists have discovered that a satisfied student can develop useful skills and acquire knowledge by growing self-confidence through his satisfaction towards the university (Letcher & Neves, 2010). further he also mentioned that a dissatisfied student can involve with negative activities such as a poor relationship with the faculty members, university staff and friends, can earn a bad grade as well.

There are several studies conducted on international student satisfaction by different scholars (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Sakthivel et al., 2005; Abu Hassan, 2008; Basha, Sweeney, & Soutar 2016; Singh, 2016; Shafaei, Abd Razak, & Nejati, 2016; Sultana & Momen, 2017) around the globe. Sumaedi et al. (2011) worked on international students' satisfaction. The findings revealed that university service quality and perceived price have a significant impact on student satisfaction. In the same opinion, Asgari and Borzooei (2014) investigated service quality and international students' satisfaction. The result of the study showed that assurance, responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and tangibles have impacts on student satisfaction. The study suggested that universities should provide quality service for international students so that their study would be meaningful at the end.

On the other hand, Negricea et al. (2014) found that tangible elements, reliability and the compliance with university value have significant impact on student





satisfaction. The study recommended that international student's satisfaction should be a priority. Additionally, Katircioglu (2012) who worked on satisfaction of international students in the university. Based on the outcome of the study, I found that empathy, assurance, responsiveness, reliability have a great impact on a student's overall satisfaction. The study further recommended that caring, passionate and empathy consideration should be given to international students.

However, the main purpose of education is not only to acquire knowledge but also to increase student's overall development (Kolb & Kolb, 2012). In recent era, universities and colleges are focusing on student satisfaction due to the dramatical expansion of universities and colleges and increased education cost as well (Stoltenberg, 2011). Student satisfaction is also involved with the institute's reputation. Ahmed et al. (2014) asserted that universities used student satisfaction as their indicator to measure students' success.

On the other hand, Sultana and Momen (2017) opined that universities should consider international student satisfaction as a vital issue. This is because satisfied students would promote the image of the school. As a result, it does not only create a negative impact on the university but also on the country. Black and Gregersen (1991) stated that adjustment is any person's physiological terms of adaptation and comfort in a new place. Nevertheless, it is really stressful to study abroad and different types of adjustments are required to study (Sultana and Momen, 2017). Also, Sultana and Momen (2017) mentioned that failure of the proper adjustment is one of the major





reasons for student dissatisfaction. International students should endeavour to adjust to the environment they find themselves.

Carter and Yeo (2016) opined that university should focus on students' adaptation or adjustment. This is because, foreign students come to different countries and face several problems. Shekarchizadeh et al. (2011) supported that when a foreign student enters a new country they may face language problems, faculty challenges, administrative challenges, academic imbalance. Students feel comfortable in an institute of their own countries rather than a foreign institute in a foreign country.

Wilkins et al. (2012) stated that the demand for international higher education around the globe may raise more than 3.5 million by the year 2025. However, the demand for international higher education around the globe may rise from 1.8 to 7.2 million customers by the year 2025 and 70% of this growth will be represented by Malaysia, India and China (Shahzad et al., 2016). There are several positive sites of Malaysian educational sector but still some negative facts exist. Sohail and Saeed (2003) mentioned that not only the foreign students who are entering Malaysia but also the local Malaysian students are also seeking quality educational services from the Malaysian government. In the similar vein, Bakar (2004) denoted that once in Malaysia National Accreditation Body rejected 40 programs of private universities because of poor course configuration. Furthermore, don't be surprised if a student takes one of you to court for not teaching properly (Rajah & Nadarajah, 2000).



As a tourist country Malaysia has a great importance of foreign students' satisfaction and their loyalty behaviour as well. If the foreign students are satisfied they will spread more good words of mouth about the institute. As a result, more foreign students will come to join that institute. This strategy works like a pull strategy of marketing rather than the push strategy. According to Sultana and Momen (2017) pull strategy is more effective than the push strategy in the service marketing sector as it calls for services from the consumers not pushing the services from the institutions. This type of strategy works best in the educational sector. However, Carter and Yeo (2016) affirmed that not only the foreign students can be a good advertisement source for Malaysia to promote themselves but also the country can prosper one step ahead by developing the service quality of education. The researcher has chosen this sector more particularly internal student satisfaction for this study. Also, the study will attempt to investigate the relationship between the quality of services provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

1.3 Problem Statement

Education is a key driver of economic growth, particularly the higher education in Malaysia. As universities become an increasingly competitive market in the world, university student satisfaction has become an important component for university. According to Thomas & Galambos (2004) students are inevitable consumers of higher institutions. University students' satisfaction is important to institutional success. As a matter of fact, most universities around the world are constantly looking at how to



improve the satisfaction of students at their institution so that their stay would be meaningful. More so, university students' satisfaction with their institution has individual, institutional and social implications (Parahoo, Harvey & Tamim, 2013). From an institutional perspective, satisfied students are more likely to continue in their studies and are more likely to succeed academically and this would enhance the reputation of the institution in the ranking. By improving student satisfaction helps in attracting and retaining high achievers who in turn increase the reputation and standing of the university (Al-Sheeb, Hamouda, & Abdella, 2018). It has been observed that a key factor of student satisfaction is the quality of the teaching staff. As a result, the use of student rating scales as an evaluative component of their teaching system has increased. Because of this study, this study used five independent variables like academic services, faculty support, administrative service, physical evidence and language support.



Ling et al. (2010) opined that to attract the international students, universities of Malaysia always compete with each other. Among all the foreign students 30% enrolled in 100 private universities while the rest of the 70% enrolled in 20 public universities in Malaysia (MOHE, 2013). The international demand for higher education is increasing dramatically around the globe (Arambewela & Hall, 2009) and Malaysia is promoting itself as an educational hub (Jalali, 2011). Therefore, it is important to know how the government can satisfy foreign students most to bring more students in Malaysia as unsatisfied international students negatively advertise the country which can be hampered badly on the overall international image of Malaysia. Sultana & Momen (2017) conducted study on international students affirmed that quality services





facilitate effective learning for international students. Hamand and Hayduk (2003) found that dissatisfaction hampers the intention of student loyalty and also dissatisfied international students will not recommend the institute to others who seek advice from them. It is advisable for university to try their possible best to increase students' satisfaction as it is crucial for any institute as crucial as air for human life Jalali (2011).

Kanji et al. (1999) stressed that Malaysia universities are concerned about rendering quality services to international students' as well as academic staff. On the other hand, Shahzad et al. (2016) opined that foreign post graduate students have negative perception towards the education quality of Malaysian universities. They also mentioned that the reason behind this dissatisfaction is the unfulfilled expectations of the students from the universities. Further articulated that the reasons for international students to choose Malaysia University, is because of the qualitative education they enjoyed.

On the other hand, Sultana and Momen (2017) have argued that most of the research on Malaysian educational institutes have concentrated on focusing on factors that can improve international student satisfaction. Thus, the overall picture is not clear regarding the factors that are influencing the international student satisfaction most. This research gap has intended the researcher to conduct the present study. Furthermore, Ibrahim, Rahman and Yasin (2014) have suggested conducting more research on the satisfaction of international students and its factors which are influencing most. Therefore, researchers have decided to conduct this study on international students' satisfaction in Malaysian context as a debatable issue in the



country. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of service provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

1.4 Research Objectives

This current study has provided six objectives to investigate between the quality of service provided in Universiti Pendidikan sultan idris and international student satisfaction. The objectives formulated are as follow:

RO1: To determine the relationship between academic services provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RO2: To determine the relationship between faculty support provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RO3: To determine the relationship between administrative services provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RO4: To determine the relationship between physical evidence provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RO5: To determine the relationship between language support provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international student satisfaction.

RO6: To determine the impact between the qualities of services provided by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (academic services, faculty support, administrative services, physical evidence, and language support) international student satisfaction.



1.5 Research Questions

This research is concerned about the Investigating between the quality of service provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction. Therefore, to fulfil the research objectives, the following research questions has been designed for this research which are given below:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between academic services provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction?

RQ2: Is there any significant relationship between faculty support provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction?

RQ3: Is there any significant relationship between administrative services provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction?

RQ4: Is there any significant relationship between physical evidence provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction?

RQ5: Is there any significant relationship language fluency support provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international student satisfaction?

RQ6: Is there any significant relationship between the qualities of service provided by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (academic services, faculty support, administrative services, physical evidence, and language support) international student satisfaction?





1.6 Research Hypotheses

Research hypotheses are all about making predictions about the expected results of the research work after data is obtained for analysis by the researcher (Creswell, 2017).

There are two variables in this current study, one independent and one dependent variable. The independent variables were quality of service provided by the university with five dimensions (academic services, faculty support, administrative service, physical evidence and language support) and dependent variable was international students' satisfaction. All these variables will be stated in null hypotheses. The hypotheses are as follow:

RH1: There is a significant positive relationship between academic services provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RH2: There is a significant positive relationship between faculty support provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RH3: There is a significant positive relationship between administrative services provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RH4: There is a significant positive relationship between physical evidence provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction.

RH5: There is a significant positive relationship between language fluency support provided by the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international student satisfaction.





RH6: There is a significant positive relationship between the qualities of service provided by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (academic services, faculty support, administrative services, physical evidence, and language fluency support) international student satisfaction.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This study is investigating the relationship between Investigating between the quality of service provided in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international student satisfaction. There are two variables used in the study, independent and dependent variable. The independent variable was the quality of services provided in the university while the dependent variable was international students' satisfaction. There are five dimensions to measuring the quality of services provided in the university. These variables are; academic services, faculty support, administrative services, physical evidence and language support.



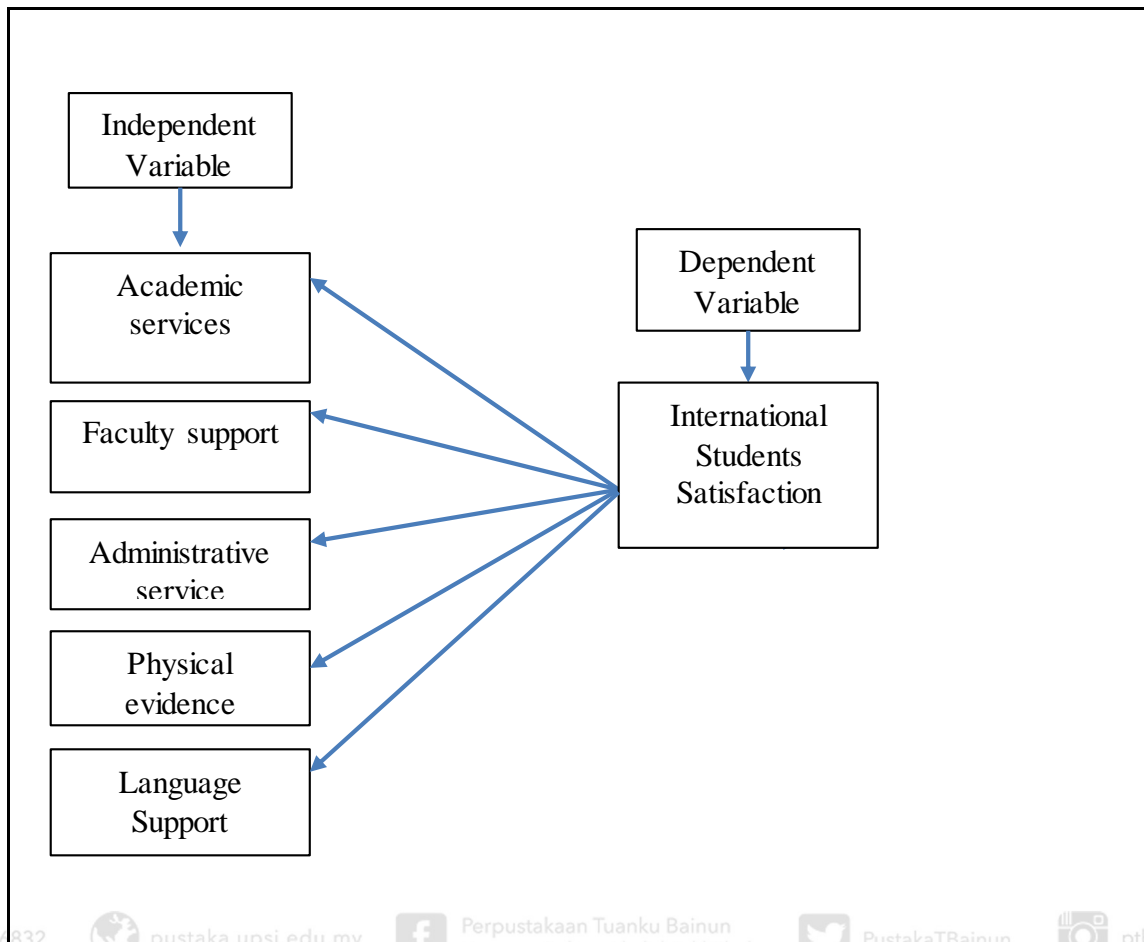


Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework for the study

1.8 Significance of the Study

Significance of the study for this study was about who will benefit from the final findings of this study. Beneficiaries of this funding are universities, policy makers as well as students' study in the university. First, the international students' affairs of UPSI will be benefited from this study as this study will focus on international students' satisfaction. They can learn from this study that which factors are influencing most international student satisfaction, after that they can take necessary steps regarding



those factors. Second, this study will assist the management of UPSI to attract more international students. After knowing all those factors which are influencing most, they can rearrange their marketing policy and show their strength against those factors to attract more international students. Third, as international students bring remittance for the government, therefore, Malaysian government will also benefit from this study. This study will help the university to attract more international students, thus Malaysian government can earn more remittance through the more international students. Fourth, as specific studies are limited on the overall satisfaction of international students, therefore, this study will also assist new researchers to conduct related study on the factors that affect international students' satisfaction.

Fifty, as this present study investigates the quality of service provided in universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and international students' satisfaction. The findings of the study will benefit the researcher in various fields of study who dearth of materials on international students' satisfaction. Because this study will be the first to be carried in UPSI. Sixty, for this study, it will contribute to the scientific community and researchers who are just new in carrying out study on international students' satisfaction. This is because international students' satisfaction is different from university to university but the knowledge derived from the findings of the study will assist them a lot.





1.9 Limitation of the study

The main limitation of this study is that it is conducted on university pendidikan sultan idris. On the other hand, the sample has chosen from one public university only. However, a sample has been chosen among the international students only who are studying in the universiti pendidikan sultan idris.

1.10 Operational Definition

There would be clarification of definition of terms as presented in this study for proper understanding of the meaning as portrayed in the thesis.

International Students

In this study, UNESCO defined international students as someone who left his or her country, or territory of origin, and moved to another country or territory with the singular objective of studying. That are students who go to another country to have education are international students.



International Student Satisfaction

Again, in this current study, Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Groggaard (2002) defined students' satisfaction as satisfaction which international students derive from all services provided by universities and colleges.

University Services

In discussion of this study, the services provided by the university refer to academic services, faculty service, administrative service, physical service and language support service.

Academic Services

Academic services in this study refer to the services provided by university which include tutoring sessions, supplemental courses, summer learning after-school programs, teacher advisors, and volunteer mentors, as well as alternative ways of grouping, counselling.



Faculty Service

This study viewed faculty service as Faculty members serve as advisors and mentors in a number of ways as they work with students and colleagues on a daily basis. Helping students get engaged, make coherent decisions about their education, understand course material, or plan future endeavors is all part of a typical faculty position.

Administrative Service

In this study, Administrative Services refers to the process of giving students effective registration service, financial aid service, and courses to choose when they are in the school setting.

Physical Service

Physical services according to the study are the infrastructure of school, library, football field and swimming pool which give students satisfaction when they are less busy.



Language Support Service

This study coined language service as the help given to international students who cannot communicate effectively with English language in the school system.

1.11 Summary

This study is about the factors which are affecting international student satisfaction in Malaysian higher educational organizations especially on UPSI. This study focuses on the students' perceived levels of significant satisfaction with varieties of services established for them by Malaysian higher institutions of learning to excel in the intercultural learning activities. The particular section of this research has discussed the background of the study, problem of the research and research objective and research question as well. The chapter has also discussed the research limitations and significance of the study. Finally, this section has concluded by defining the operational definition of the chosen topic.