

# Quality of Dormitory Services in Urmia University of Medical Science: Female Student's Perceptions

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**ABSTRACT:** Accommodation as one of the necessities of life during studying is important. This study aimed to assess the quality of residential services from the perspective of female students in dormitories of Urmia University of Medical Sciences. This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in 20 the stratified 13. The sample size was determined 320 female students. Respondents between dormitories specified with the stratified random sampling method, and in dormitories even rooms were selected randomly. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and Independent T test, One-way analysis of variance and Pearson correlation coefficient. Questionnaire completion rate was 93%. Of total respondents, 219 persons (73.8%) were in the age group 21-25. Quality of dormitory services in view of 74% students (230 people) was average or good. The total mean score of quality of dormitory services were  $2.18 \pm 0.72$ . One-way analysis of variance showed that the mean scores of service quality, were significantly different among three dormitories ( $f=10.982$ ,  $P=0.000$ ). Pearson test showed the positive correlation among mean scores of five dimensions together and with the overall quality of services ( $P < 0.05$ ). The quality of residential services at the Urmia University of Medical Sciences was acceptable and satisfactory. The remarkable point for those responsible, were maintaining the quality of services in dormitories and planning to higher quality of service, which will be operational by getting feedback from students, and policy making based on.

**Key words:** Quality, Dormitory, Urmia, Female Student

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## INTRODUCTION

Accommodation is one of the most essential necessities of life and inconceivable to relinquish (Yildirim, 2010). In higher education management also students' accommodation is a considerable matter in many countries of the world (Nimako, 2013). Academic productivity extremely depends on facilities and services for the students, especially housing (Akinyode, 2014).

Improving the quality of education in a college requires a proper environment to support the growth of student learning. Student dormitory is an excellent place for students to study and develop. Thus, providing high quality dormitory services and understanding the needs of students are important issues that colleges ought to focus on them (Liu, 2013).

The physical environment helps students develop their intellectual abilities and gain social cohesion and be responsible citizens (Najib et al., 2011; Hassanain, 2008). Places used by students are there, that happen their academic life (Yildirim, 2010). Therefore, studies on students also encompass residence. Entrance to university is not just attending in classes, living in dorms have many opportunities for growth of students along with other interests (Blimling, 1993).

Student accommodation has different dimensions. Research reinforce the idea that students living in student dormitories are more social and more

willing to participate in extracurricular activities in college (Feldman and Newcomb, 1969).

Living in a dorm rises opportunity to participate in social and non-teaching interests, because the student is placed at the center of activity and has easier access to classmates and other students. This participation influences student and, has a double impact in her self-reliance (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

Several studies have investigated the role of physical and social factors in student satisfaction with Accommodation (Khozaei et al., 2010; Foubert et al., 1998), or have studied rational factors such as space and overcrowding (Kaya and Erkip, 2001). Proper accommodation of facilities ensures proper training purposes, and paves the way for other objectives such as social cohesion and more responsible citizen. Also, it is effective in getting the university to its stated mission (Hassanain, 2007).

Staying in dormitory for most of students takes place after entering university, where they spend much of their time and energy to learn, that can flourish and fulfill educational, cultural, welfare and academic goals (Heilweil, 1973). Some studies have showed that the educational status and success of students living in dormitories prominently are better than others (Sheely and Whalen, 2005; Araujo, 2010).

Quality in higher education institutions, including student accommodation were the subject of several studies (Astin, 1977; De Jager, 2006; Bondinubaet al.,

2015) and is an effective factor in student satisfaction (Mansoorian, 2002; Malik et al., 2010). According to studies conducted in Iran, satisfaction with services at student dormitories suggest that the quality is a determinant element (Saeidyand Esmailzadeh, 2010; Mohammadian and Khanbabazadeh, 2009; Mansoorian, 2002; Payamani, 2001).

It is needed that higher education as a service industry understand the expectations and needs of the students as the most important customers (Kitcheroen, 2004) and to ensure that services are offered with proper management and expected quality (Brochado and Marques, 2007).

Although in recent decades, institutions and organizations considered quality of service as a source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Chen and Aritejo, 2008; Chun-yan, 2008; Gounariset al., 2003), the quality of student housing, as an important non-academic feature of university life, largely ignored (Mohammad et al., 2012).

In Iran, the quality of student dormitory services hasn't been noteworthy. So, and given the importance of quality of service and knowing the views of students as customers, and since most of students at the Urmia University of Medical Sciences (UUMS), and especially girls, were living in dormitories, this study aimed to assess the quality of dormitory services from the perspective of female students living in dormitories.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This Cross-sectional study conducted in 2013 at UUMS in Iran's West Azerbaijan province. It has three female dormitories and almost all students come from Iran. The study population was female students living in dormitories. The sample size was calculated using Cochran formula and final sample size was determined 320 people. Respondents between dormitories specified with the stratified random sampling method, according to residents and in dormitories even rooms are also randomly selected. At least one semester living in dormitory and residence for more than three days in a week at dormitory was inclusion criteria.

Research questionnaire was SERVQUAL (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 1985), an instrument which consists of 5 dimensions including 22 statements to evaluate the quality of services. The five dimensions are: 1. Physical and tangible dimension that means sense of physical space of services, including facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication channels; 2. Reliability of service namely the ability to serve as a safe and reliable service; 3. Responsiveness that is employees'

willingness to cooperate and help students; 4. Assurance that show an organizations' ability to instill a sense of competence and confidence to the customers; and 5. Empathy that is special deal with the students based on their mood.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire confirmed in Iran and its Persian version was used in country's higher education sector (Kebriaei et al., 2002; Rastgoo, 2014; Nabilou, 2014). Statements were designed in Likert scale, ranged from 0-4, and respondents chose only one answer according to their experience of living in the dormitory. Data were collected by visiting the dormitories and students agreement, and justification of them.

SPSS (version 16.00) was used for data analysis. Descriptive and analytical statistics were used in this study. Frequency analysis was used to describe the student characteristics and educational background; and to describe quality perception in five dimensions of dormitory services. Analytical tests were used to examine quality perception between five dimensions of dormitory services. So, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Independent T test were used to investigate the relationship between nominal variables and perception of quality. Pearson's test was used to determine correlation and relationship between five dimensions.

## RESULTS

Of the finished questionnaires, 297 cases (93%) were useable. Fifty three percent (157 people) of respondents lived in Boostan, 23.5% (70 people) in Golestan, and 23.5% (70 people) in Kowsar dormitories. In total, 219 people (73.8%) were in the age group of 21-25 years. (Table 1).

Frequency Analysis of statements in five dimensions showed, statement number 5 " staff is friendly and polite" in the assurance dimension had the most frequency rate of 91 percent, in other words, 270 people had been evaluated this statement, as average or high quality. On the other hand statement number 4 " The modern and latest equipment in dormitory " in the tangible dimension had the lowest frequency of 43.1 percent, In other words, 128 students had been evaluated this statement as poor quality.

Comparison between dimensions showed that 83.5% of students (248 people) had been evaluated quality of services in the assurance dimension as average or high. On the contrary, quality of services was poor from the view of 28.9 percent of respondents (86 people) in the empathy dimension. Overall quality of dormitory services including five

dimensions, in view of 12 percent of the students (36 people) was very good, 31% of students (92 people) good, 31% of students average (92 people), 16% of students (47 people) poor and of 10% (30 people) very poor.

The highest mean score among items, was about the statement number one "clean and tidy appearance of staff" in the tangible dimension with value of  $2.68 \pm 0.95$  and the Lowest mean score was related to the statement number 4 "enough time to

provide residential services" in the tangible dimension with the value of  $1.68 \pm 1.19$ .

Among the five dimensions of services, assurance had the highest mean score with the value of  $2.40 \pm 0.85$  and empathy had the lowest mean score with the value of  $1.91 \pm 0.93$ . The total mean score of perception of quality of dormitory services including all five dimensions were  $2.18 \pm 0.72$ . Comparison between dormitories showed that the Kowsar dormitory had the highest mean score of service quality (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Students' Characteristics at UUMS Female Dormitories

Students' Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Age group (year)	<20	57	19.1
	20-25	220	73.8
	26-30	14	4.7
	>30	4	1.3
Dormitory	Boostan	157	53
	Golestan	70	23.5
	Kowsar	70	23.5
Study Level	Bachelor degree*	20	6.7
	Bachelor degree	185	62.3
	Master	13	4.4
	professional doctorate	79	26.6
School	Dentistry	14	4.7
	Health	56	18.8
	Medicine	67	22.5
	Nursing	59	19.7
	Para medicine	88	29.2
	Pharmacology	13	4.4
Original Living place	city	268	90
	village	29	10

\* Discontinuous

**Table 2.** Mean Scores of Perception on Service Quality Based on Dormitory

Dormitory \ Dimensions	Tangibles	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
Kowsar	2.73	2.39	2.13	2.74	2.26
Golestan	2.66	2.3	2.03	2.31	1.83
Boostan	1.91	2.09	1.99	2.29	1.78
Total	2.28	2.22	2.03	2.4	1.91

ANOVA showed no statistically significant difference in students' perception on the service quality based on school of education ( $P=0.234$ ), age groups ( $P=0.323$ ) and study level ( $P=0.158$ ) (Table 3).

On the other hand ANOVA showed the mean scores of service quality significantly different among three dormitories ( $f=10.982$ ,  $P=0.000$ ). LSD test was used for post hoc comparison and, Kowsar dormitory had significantly higher mean scores of service quality than two other dormitories (Table 4).

Independent-samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference in students' perceptions on the service quality based on main residence place of students ( $P=0.656$ ). Pearson test showed positive correlation among the five dimensions together and with the overall quality of services ( $P < 0.05$ ) according to students' perception in UUMS dormitories. The highest correlation was between overall service quality and reliability dimension (Table 5).

**Table 3:** Comparison of Mean Squares of Perception on Service Quality Based on Age, Level of Study and School

Variable	F	df	Sig.
Age	1.167	3	.323
Level of study	1.742	3	.158
School	1.374	5	.234

**Table 4:** Comparison of Mean Squares of Perception on Service Quality Based on Dormitory

Items	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1017.756	2	508.878	10.982*	.0001
Within Groups	13623.807	294	46.339		
Total	14641.562	296			

\* P=0.05

**Table 5:** Correlation Between Services Dimensions and Overall Service Quality Based on Students Perceptions at UUMS Female Dormitories

Dimensions		1	2	3	4	5	6
1-Tangibles	Pearson Correlation	1					
2-Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.609*	1				
3-Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.483*	.775*	1			
4- Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.472*	.671*	.644*	1		
5- Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.458*	.596**	.648*	.684*	1	
6- Overall quality	Pearson Correlation	.723*	.876*	.843*	.838*	.820*	1

\* P=0.05; \*\* P=0.0001

## DISCUSSION

Based on searching published resources available, this study was one of the few published studies on the quality of dormitory services in the country. Another interesting point is that, few published studies about dormitories, investigated satisfaction and some other aspects also. The results showed that most of students evaluated quality of dormitory services average or good. Also students perceived significant difference among dimensions of quality in dormitory services.

In a study conducted in facilities of Gonabad medical Science University in the east of Iran, the poorest quality was reported in dormitories comparing with other facilities of university (Mansoorian, 2002). Results of a study in Tehran medical science universities (1998) showed, 45.7% of studied dormitories had serious residency problems and only 1.3% of students described situation as proper (Payamani, 2001). This difference could be because of the different time or different subject of two studies (quality of services vs. problems).

Based on a recent study at Bushehr medical science university in south of Iran, the overall quality of services, was proper except in tangible dimension, which is in line with the present study (Rastgoo, 2014)

In a study conducted in Malaysia, 77% of students evaluated quality of dormitory services as good or slightly good and only 6% of them evaluated quality of dormitory services very poor (Bashirer al., 2012). In the present study, 74% of students declared the quality of dormitory services as good or average, and 10% of them evaluated quality of dormitory services very poor, Which is similar to the aforementioned study. The mean scores of service quality in Bashir's study and in the present study were  $2.84 \pm 0.84$  (Bashir et al., 2012) and  $2.18 \pm 0.72$ , respectively. Although the result of the two studies are the same or higher than the average, but in the present study the service quality was assessed a bit lower. The standard deviation represents a slight deviation from the mean, in other words, students' perception of the quality of dormitory services stress that, quality varied between 2 and 2.5 which explains average quality.

Comparison between dormitories showed that the Kowsar dormitory had the highest mean score in whole and in each of five dimensions, especially tangible and assurance which is consistent with Shaari (2014). A few points could explain this difference. First, Kowsar dormitory had a newer building and furniture compared to other centers. Second, it was in the main campus in remote area, while two other centers were situated at metropolitan. Third, Perhaps residents in Kowsar dormitory had different socio-demographic background such as income level, lifestyle, which resulted in higher perception. Forth, staff interaction with students in dormitories could explain the high perception in Kowsar center also.

In this study there was no significant relationship between the quality perception based on study level and location. In a study conducted at Ardabil medical science university in northwest of Iran, satisfaction was significant In the case of location and study level (Mohammadian and Khanbabazadeh, 2009).

In the present study, there was no significant difference between students' age groups in mean scores of service quality. In Payamani's study (2001) statistical tests confirmed relationship between the severity of the problems with age and place of residence of students staying in dormitories. Service quality perception in the study conducted by Bashir (2012) also did not differ significantly by age.

According to the results of present study, among dimensions, assurance and empathy had the highest and lowest mean scores respectively. Research in Pakistan, turkey, Malaysia and America showed the highest mean score of assurance among five dimensions (Zainuddin, et al., 2014; Hasan, et al., 2008; Aksarayli and Saygin, 2011; Malik et al., 2010; Arshad et al., 2011; Kerlin, 2000). Also In three cases, empathy dimension had the lowest mean score of quality (Hasan, et al., 2008; Aksarayli and Saygin, 2011; Malik et al., 2010). These studies confirm the results of present study, indicating the high quality in assurance and poor quality in empathy dimensions.

Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence are important, and are applicable to the environments such as dormitories which staff encounter with students frequently. On the other hand, a comprehensive study and comparison with other studies, showed convergence and divergence of results and remarkable point was weak position of empathy compared to the other dimensions of quality. Regarding content and details, each student is special and students expect officials to pay special attention to their characteristics and problems.

In Bashir's study (2012) each dimension was correlated with the overall quality of services and strengthens their positive correlation. In this regard

the strongest correlation with the overall quality was about empathy, and assurance was in a second place.

In this study, each dimension correlated positively with the overall quality of services and strengthens it. Therefore, it is suggested that service dimensions, will enhance students overall perception of service quality. The highest correlation with the overall service quality was about assurance, which wasn't in line with Bashir's study (2012), but was consistent with the results of Malik (2010) and could explain students trust and confidence to activities of authorities in providing quality services to students. Also, given that, perception of quality is a subjective and personal matter, it can cause some differences or discrepancies.

In Radder's study (2009) in South Africa, students evaluated the quality of services fairly poor and interaction dimension which equals' reliability and responsiveness dimensions in this study had an important role in determining the overall quality of service. The largest gaps were in statements of interaction dimension, "providing the promised service on time" and "ease of being contacted by students", respectively. Also the quality of dormitory services wasn't significant based on age (Radder, 2009). Mohammad in his study reported negative gap in all dimension, especially assurance, which means poor service quality (Mohammad, 2012).

Different results in different studies show that students in different universities have different understandings about quality and its dimensions. This implies that most universities need improving plans that should be based on students' viewpoint.

## **CONCLUSION**

The quality of services in females' dormitories at UUMS was good/ average. So the remarkable point is that maintaining the quality of services and improving quality of dormitory services depends on getting feedback from students and policymaking based on. A closer look showed that the service quality of empathy dimension requires more attention.

This exploratory study was conducted at UUMS and according to the specific characteristics of female gender was limited to girls' dormitories. Investigating the quality of dormitory services is far less welcomed by researchers in Iran. So, implementation of such studies in other medical universities and considering the local and national conditions can further clarify perceptions and expectations of students about dormitory services.

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