

Thai Students' Satisfaction with Academic Services at Universities

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Abstract: This study investigates the satisfaction levels of Thai students from Pattani enrolled in four public universities in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Using a quantitative descriptive method, the research evaluates perceptions of academic service quality across five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance. Data were collected from all 29 Thai students actively enrolled at Andalas University, UIN Padang, UIN Batusangkar, and UIN Bukittinggi through an online Likert-scale questionnaire. The findings reveal overall high satisfaction levels, with variations across institutions: Andalas University scored the highest (4.14), followed by UIN Bukittinggi (3.98), UIN Padang (3.97), and UIN Batusangkar (3.74). While most students expressed positive perceptions, areas such as service convenience, speed, and infrastructure emerged as needing improvement. The study highlights the importance of continuous service evaluation and culturally responsive practices to enhance the academic experiences of international students in Indonesian higher education institutions.

Keywords: Satisfaction index; Thai students; academic services; higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a foundation of national development, serving as a key driver for improving human resources and fostering societal progress (Sulisworo, 2016). Modern society views education not only as a fundamental need but also as an essential investment. The return on this investment is often realized through career advancements and societal contributions, reinforcing the importance of quality education (Kotler, 2002; Merrett, 1966). For many, this pursuit extends to higher education abroad, offering opportunities for personal growth and access to specialized programs.

The decision to study abroad reflects a significant commitment from students, requiring substantial financial, emotional, and academic investments (Zhang et al., 2013). Historically, studying abroad has been a pathway to acquiring advanced knowledge, dating back to the colonial era. Today, international education continues to attract students motivated by diverse educational interests, scholarship opportunities, and the prospect of global exposure. Thai students, particularly from the Pattani region, exemplify this trend.

Supporting this, parental social support plays a crucial role in shaping students' career adaptability, which includes their readiness to face the financial, emotional, and academic demands of studying abroad (Rahmi, Firman, & Afdal, 2023). Similarly, effective vocabulary learning strategies, especially those developed in intensive English programs, are essential for students preparing to pursue international education, as they enhance language competence and academic adaptation (Artika & Fitriani, 2024). These findings

reinforce the multifaceted preparation required for successful overseas study, encompassing both linguistic readiness and socio-emotional support.

Pattani, a southern region of Thailand, was once an Islamic Malay kingdom before becoming part of Thailand in 1902. Its predominantly Muslim population, alongside neighbouring provinces such as Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun, has a rich tradition of Islamic education (Wulandari, 2018). With an estimated Muslim population of 2.9 million, representing 4.29% of Thailand's total population, Pattani has emerged as a centre for Islamic learning and cultural preservation (Ramadhan, 2021).

In recent years, the younger generation of Pattani has shown increasing enthusiasm for higher education, both domestically and abroad. Indonesia has become a popular destination for these students, particularly the province of West Sumatra. To support their academic journey, the *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Patani Thailand-Indonesia* (PMIPTI) was established to facilitate communication and unity among Pattani students in Indonesia (Duereh & Irwandi, 2023; Nofra & Inggria Kharisma, 2020). This organization underscores the students' commitment to academic and cultural integration in their host country.

Currently, there are 29 Pattani students enrolled across four state universities in West Sumatra: Andalas University (1 student), UIN Padang (15 students), UIN Batusangkar (7 students), and UIN Bukittinggi (6 students). These students face dual challenges—cultural adaptation and academic demands—which necessitate strong institutional support systems to ensure their academic success.

Despite the increasing number of international students from Southern Thailand in Indonesia, particularly in West Sumatra, there remains a lack of empirical research specifically examining their satisfaction with academic services. This gap is significant, as academic service quality plays a critical role in shaping international students' experiences, retention rates, and academic performance (Zhang et al., 2013; Butt & Rehman, 2010). Moreover, student satisfaction is widely acknowledged as a core indicator of service effectiveness and institutional accountability in higher education (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

In addition, the presence of international students—especially those from culturally and religiously distinct backgrounds such as the Muslim community of Pattani—requires higher education institutions to design culturally responsive and inclusive academic services. Understanding their expectations and levels of satisfaction not only contributes to service improvement but also enhances the institutions' global reputation and competitiveness. This study is therefore timely and relevant, as it provides insights into how public universities in West Sumatra are meeting the academic needs of a growing international student population.

This study aims to evaluate Thai students' satisfaction with academic services provided by universities in West Sumatra. By analyzing five key dimensions of satisfaction—tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance—this research seeks to identify institutional strengths and areas in need of improvement. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of service delivery effectiveness and inform the development of more supportive academic environments for international students.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to assess the satisfaction levels of Thai students enrolled at four state universities in West Sumatra: Andalas University, UIN Padang, UIN Batusangkar, and UIN Bukittinggi. The survey method is widely recognized for its ability to gather data from both large and small populations,

providing insights into respondents' beliefs, opinions, and behaviors (Adiyanta, 2019; Fraenkel et al., 2012). By adopting a positivistic approach, this method ensures objectivity in evaluating perceptions and experiences.

The population of this study comprised 29 Thai students, with a total sampling technique used to include all participants (Minnitt et al., 2007). The primary variable of interest was student satisfaction, measured through a satisfaction index based on five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance. These dimensions were operationalized using indicators derived from relevant academic service attributes, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the students' experiences. The questionnaire, comprising 20 items per dimension, was developed in both Bahasa Indonesia and English to accommodate the linguistic backgrounds of the participants. To maintain accessibility, the questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, allowing respondents to complete it remotely and securely.

Data collection was conducted using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire validated for reliability. The instrument consisted of 20 questions for each satisfaction dimension, with responses ranging from “very unsatisfactory” (1) to “very satisfactory” (5). This approach, known as the Likert Summated Ratings (LSR) scale, facilitates nuanced categorization of satisfaction levels (Adiyanta, 2019; Fraenkel et al., 2012). The questionnaire was distributed online to ensure accessibility and compliance.

Prior to full distribution, a validity and reliability test were conducted. The instrument's internal consistency was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient above 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability. The data analysis process involved two stages. First, the responses from Google Forms were exported to Microsoft Excel for data cleaning and coding. Second, the cleaned dataset was imported into IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 for quantitative analysis.

The scores obtained were classified into five satisfaction levels: critical (1.00–1.80), low (1.81–2.60), moderate (2.61–3.40), high (3.41–4.20), and very high (4.21–5.00). These categories provide a detailed understanding of students' perceptions, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in academic services. The classification criteria allow for a systematic interpretation of satisfaction trends across the studied universities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Student Satisfaction Index

This study involved 29 Thai students across four universities in West Sumatra: Andalas University, UIN Padang, UIN Batusangkar, and UIN Bukittinggi. All participants responded to the questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, achieving a 100% response rate. The distribution of respondents varied across universities, with UIN Padang contributing the highest number of respondents (15 students), followed by UIN Batusangkar and UIN Bukittinggi (8 students each), and Andalas University (9 students). This uneven distribution reflects the actual enrollment patterns of Thai students at these institutions and highlights the need for contextualized analysis of their satisfaction levels.

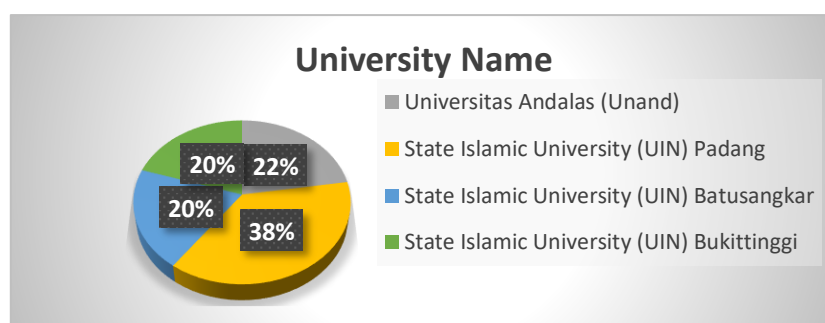


Figure 1. Number of Respondents by university

Table 2. Number of Samples and Questionnaires Answered

No.	Higher Education	Total	Questionnaire Back	Realized Sample
1	Andalas University (Unand)	9	9	100%
2	State Islamic University (UIN) Padang	15	15	100%
3	State Islamic University (UIN) Batusangkar	8	8	100%
4	State Islamic University (UIN) Bukittinggi	8	8	100%

The responses collected provided comprehensive insights into the students' perceptions of academic services. The universities demonstrated consistent efforts to maintain academic service quality, as evidenced by the high response rates and active engagement of the students. The uniformity in questionnaire completion across institutions also underscores the reliability of the data and the students' commitment to participating in the study. Similar studies emphasize the importance of high response rates in ensuring robust data for evaluating service quality (Adiyanta, 2019; Minnitt et al., 2007).

Further analysis revealed variations in satisfaction levels across the institutions, which may be attributed to differences in resource availability, administrative practices, and service delivery methods. These factors are consistent with findings from previous research, which suggest that institutional infrastructure and responsiveness significantly influence student satisfaction (Kotler, 2002; Zhang et al., 2013). This study underscores the importance of addressing these disparities to enhance the overall academic experience for international students.

Satisfaction Index on *Tangibles* Dimension

The analysis of the tangibles dimension, which evaluates the availability and convenience of academic services, revealed significant variations in satisfaction among Thai students at four universities in West Sumatra. Andalas University (UNAND) achieved the highest score for service availability (4.30, very satisfactory), followed by UIN Padang (4.15, satisfactory), UIN Bukittinggi (4.10, satisfactory), and UIN Batusangkar (3.50, satisfactory). These results suggest that all campuses provided accessible academic services, with UNAND standing out for its superior performance in this aspect.

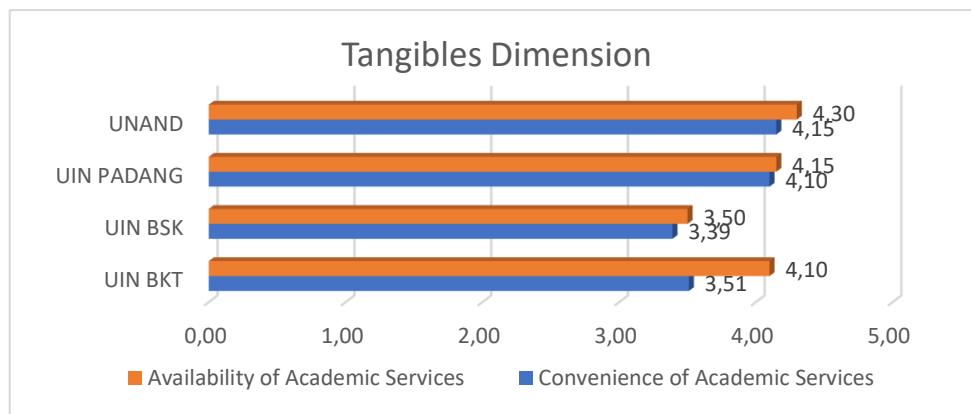


Figure 2. Satisfaction Index on Tangibles Dimension

In terms of service convenience, the scores were slightly lower across all universities. UNAND and UIN Padang both scored 4.15 (satisfactory), UIN Bukittinggi achieved 4.10 (satisfactory), and UIN Batusangkar scored 3.39 (moderately satisfactory). These findings indicate a consistent trend: while academic services were generally available, the level of convenience did not always match. This imbalance underscores the challenges faced by universities in adapting their service delivery mechanisms, particularly in ensuring user-friendly and accessible systems for international students.

The disparity between service availability and convenience highlights a critical area for improvement. Prior research emphasizes that both dimensions are essential for achieving high levels of student satisfaction (Adiyanta, 2019; Fraenkel et al., 2012). While availability ensures that resources are present, convenience determines how effectively these resources meet the students' needs. For example, a well-developed e-library system may be available, but if it is difficult to navigate, students may still experience frustration, affecting their overall satisfaction.

Comparative analysis across the four universities indicates that UNAND consistently outperformed its counterparts in both availability and convenience. This could be attributed to better infrastructure, efficient administrative processes, and effective use of technology. Conversely, the lower scores for UIN Batusangkar suggest potential gaps in these areas. Addressing these discrepancies requires targeted interventions, such as enhancing digital platforms, improving user support services, and conducting regular feedback assessments to align services with student expectations (Minnitt et al., 2007).

To optimize the academic experience for Thai students, universities in West Sumatra must strive to balance service availability and convenience. This involves not only ensuring that academic services are accessible but also enhancing their usability and comfort. A student-centered approach that prioritizes responsive service design, coupled with continuous evaluation, is critical for maintaining high satisfaction levels and fostering a supportive learning environment.

To provide a more nuanced analysis, the satisfaction responses of the 29 Thai students were disaggregated by university and examined within the tangibles dimension, which refers to the availability and comfort of academic facilities. Respondents scoring 3.41 or above were classified as "satisfied," while those scoring 3.40 or below were classified as "dissatisfied." At Andalas University, 100% of students (9 out of 9) reported satisfaction, reflecting uniformly positive perceptions of tangible academic services. UIN Padang showed similarly strong results, with approximately 93.3% of students (14 out of

15) satisfied and 6.7% dissatisfied. UIN Bukittinggi achieved full satisfaction, with 100% (8 out of 8) of students satisfied. Conversely, UIN Batusangkar exhibited lower satisfaction levels, with 62.5% (5 out of 8) of students satisfied and 37.5% dissatisfied, indicating potential deficiencies in the availability or comfort of facilities at this institution.

Satisfaction Index on Reliability Dimension

The analysis of the reliability dimension revealed high levels of satisfaction among Thai students regarding academic services across the four universities in West Sumatra. As shown in Figure 3, UNAND achieved the highest satisfaction scores for both service convenience and reliability, indicating that the university was perceived as providing consistent and dependable academic services. UIN Bukittinggi, UIN Padang, and UIN Batusangkar followed, with varying satisfaction levels, suggesting that reliability remained a strong feature of academic services at these institutions as well.

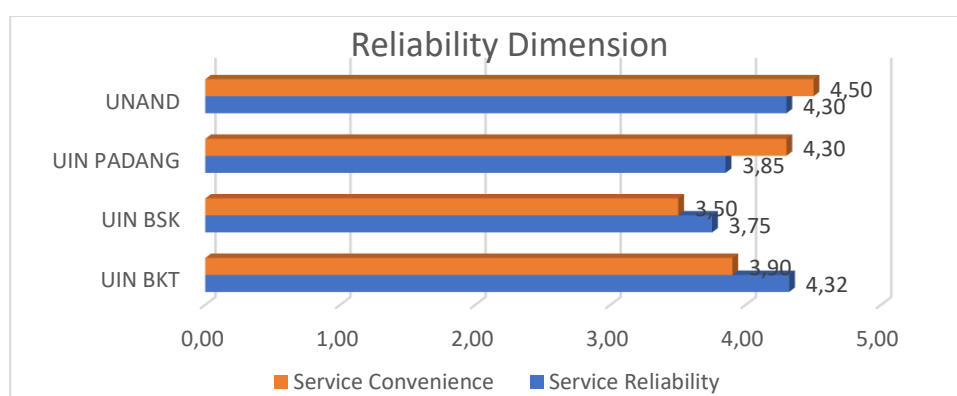


Figure 3. Satisfaction Index on the Reliability Dimension

Interestingly, a notable trend emerged when comparing the ease of service with reliability scores. At UNAND and UIN Padang, students rated the ease of access to services higher than service reliability, which suggests that while services were easily accessible, they did not always meet the reliability expectations of the students. In contrast, UIN Batusangkar and UIN Bukittinggi showed the opposite trend, where reliability was rated higher than the ease of access to services. This finding indicates that students may have experienced more dependable services, even though they encountered challenges in accessing them.

The reliability dimension, which assesses the consistency and trustworthiness of academic services, was similarly analyzed across the four universities. Students scoring 3.41 or higher were considered “satisfied,” while those scoring 3.40 or lower were classified as “dissatisfied.” At Andalas University, 100% of students (9 out of 9) expressed satisfaction with service reliability. UIN Padang demonstrated a high satisfaction rate of approximately 86.7% (13 out of 15), with 13.3% dissatisfied. UIN Bukittinggi reported satisfaction from 87.5% of students (7 out of 8), with 12.5% dissatisfied. Meanwhile, UIN Batusangkar showed a slightly lower satisfaction rate of 75% (6 out of 8), with 25% of students expressing dissatisfaction, suggesting room for improvement in service consistency and dependability at this institution.

These contrasting patterns highlight an important distinction between service availability and reliability. The ease of accessing academic services does not always correlate with high reliability, and vice versa. This discrepancy could be influenced by

factors such as technological infrastructure, administrative practices, and daily experiences that affect students' perceptions of service quality (Adiyanta, 2019). For universities, it is essential to address both aspects simultaneously—ensuring services are both accessible and consistently reliable to meet students' expectations.

Satisfaction Index on Empathy Dimension

The analysis of the empathy dimension, which reflects the empathy dimension level (care) in providing academic services, shows varying satisfaction levels across the four universities in West Sumatra. As seen in Figure 4, students from UNAND, UIN Padang, and UIN Bukittinggi expressed high satisfaction with the empathy shown in academic services, indicating that these institutions demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing students' needs. However, UIN Batusangkar recorded a moderately satisfactory score, suggesting that while care was evident, it did not meet the higher expectations of students in this area.

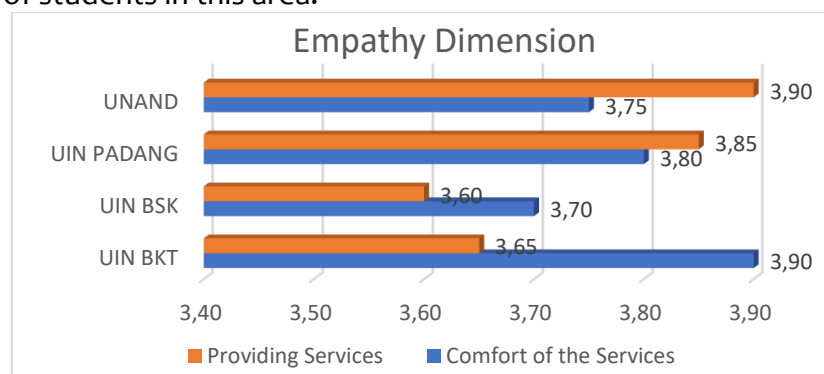


Figure 4. Satisfaction Index on Empathy Dimension

Interestingly, although all universities demonstrated high satisfaction levels in terms of care provided, there was a noticeable gap in the comfort of the services offered. This discrepancy suggests that universities may prioritize showing concern for students' academic needs but may not always focus on ensuring the comfort and ease of access to these services. Students reported a high level of empathy, but the overall service experience was sometimes stuck by less comfortable or less user-friendly systems, which is an important factor in enhancing overall satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2013).

The empathy dimension, which reflects the degree of care and personal attention provided in academic services, was evaluated across the four universities. Students with scores of 3.41 or above were classified as “satisfied,” while those scoring 3.40 or below were considered “dissatisfied.” At Andalas University, 100% of students (9 out of 9) reported satisfaction with the empathy shown by university staff. UIN Padang exhibited a satisfaction rate of approximately 86.7% (13 out of 15), with 13.3% dissatisfied. UIN Bukittinggi achieved full satisfaction, with 100% (8 out of 8) of students expressing positive perceptions of empathy. Conversely, UIN Batusangkar recorded the lowest satisfaction level in this dimension, with 62.5% (5 out of 8) of students satisfied and 37.5% dissatisfied, indicating a need for enhanced attention to student care and support at this institution.

These findings highlight the importance of balancing empathy with service comfort. While it is crucial for universities to show concern and support for students, equally important is the need to create a comfortable and accessible environment for service delivery. Institutions in West Sumatra should consider improving both the

emotional aspects of service (care) and the practical aspects (comfort) to provide a more holistic academic experience, in line with best practices in student satisfaction research (Adiyanta, 2019).

Satisfaction Index on Responsiveness Dimension

The analysis of the responsiveness dimension revealed significant differences in satisfaction levels among Thai students regarding academic services across the four universities in West Sumatra. As depicted in Figure 5, UNAND achieved a very high satisfaction level for responsiveness, followed by UIN Padang, UIN Bukittinggi, and UIN Batusangkar, which all recorded high satisfaction. This suggests that while all universities responded to students' needs, UNAND stood out for its superior responsiveness in addressing academic concerns.

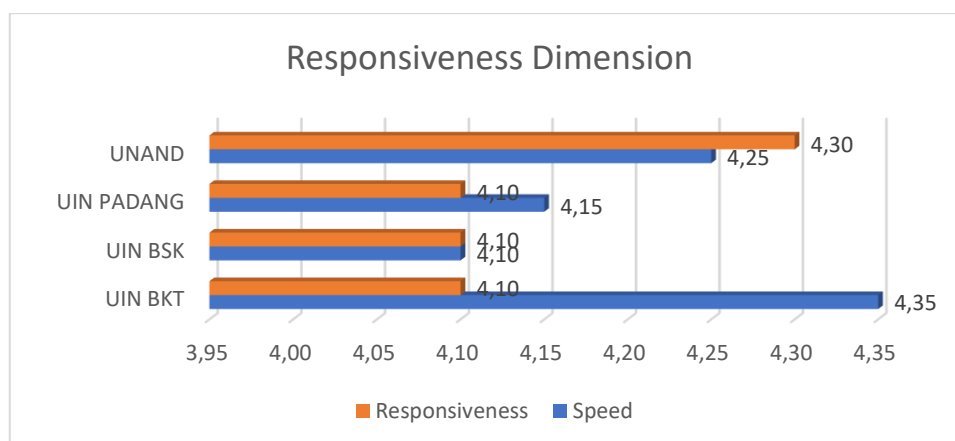


Figure 5. Satisfaction Index on Responsiveness Dimension

In terms of the speed of service provision, UNAND and UIN Bukittinggi scored the highest, with a very high level of satisfaction, while UIN Padang and UIN Batusangkar scored at a satisfactory level. These results highlight a critical area for improvement: the speed at which academic services are delivered. Efficient service delivery, including prompt access to online learning platforms and academic resources, was crucial, and universities must prioritize enhancing the speed and accessibility of their services (Haryadi & Selviani, 2021).

The findings underscore that responsiveness alone is not sufficient for achieving high satisfaction; it must be accompanied by swift service delivery. Factors such as internet connectivity, access to e-learning platforms, and the speed of academic portals play a significant role in shaping students' satisfaction levels (Adiyanta, 2019; Fraenkel et al., 2012). Therefore, universities in West Sumatra should focus on improving both the responsiveness and speed of their academic services to ensure a seamless and satisfactory experience for their students.

To provide a more nuanced analysis, the responsiveness dimension, which measures the speed and willingness of academic staff to assist students, was assessed across the four universities. Students scoring 3.41 or above were categorized as "satisfied," while those scoring 3.40 or below were categorized as "dissatisfied." At Andalas University, 100% of students (9 out of 9) expressed satisfaction with responsiveness. UIN Padang showed a satisfaction rate of 80% (12 out of 15), with 20% dissatisfied. UIN Bukittinggi had 87.5% satisfaction (7 out of 8), with 12.5% dissatisfied. In

contrast, UIN Batusangkar demonstrated the lowest satisfaction in this dimension, with only 50% of students (4 out of 8) satisfied and an equal 50% expressing dissatisfaction, highlighting significant variability in service responsiveness at this institution.

Satisfaction Index on the Assurance Dimension

The analysis of the assurance dimension reveals important insights into students' perceptions of the quality of academic services across universities in West Sumatra. As shown in Figure 6, the satisfaction levels of Thai students regarding the assurance aspect, which includes the reliability and competence of lecturers and campus leaders, were generally high across all four universities. UNAND, UIN Padang, UIN Batusangkar, and UIN Bukittinggi all achieved satisfactory scores, indicating that students felt confident in the academic leadership and teaching quality.

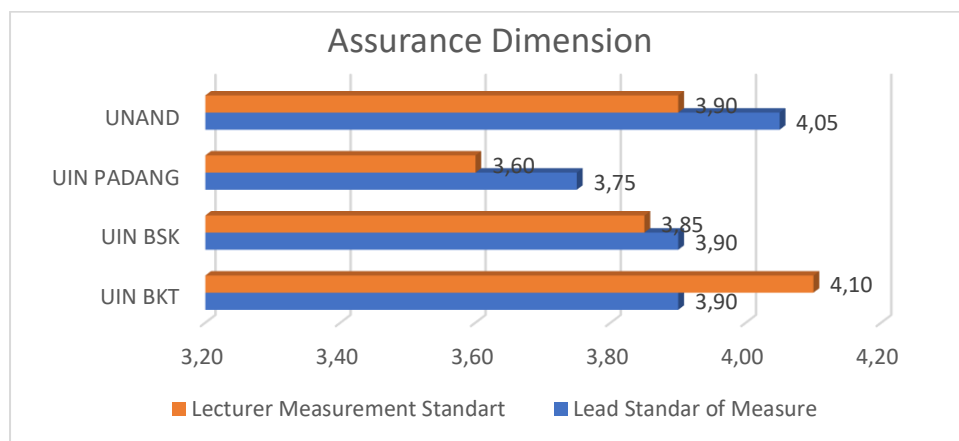


Figure 6. Satisfaction Index on the Assurance Dimension

Further analysis, however, reveals a gap between students' perceptions of the standards set by lecturers and those set by campus leaders. In general, students rated the standards set by campus leaders higher than those set by lecturers. This trend was consistent across most of the universities, with UIN Bukittinggi being the notable exception. At UIN Bukittinggi, the highest score was given to the standards of lecturers, suggesting that students may have perceived teaching quality as a more significant factor than leadership in determining their satisfaction with academic services.

These findings highlight an interesting dichotomy between the perception of academic leadership and teaching standards. While leadership plays a crucial role in shaping academic services, the quality of teaching is often considered more directly impactful by students. This aligns with previous studies, which suggest that students prioritize the competence and accessibility of their lecturers in evaluating the overall academic experience (Adiyanta, 2019). In this case, the students' focus on the quality of teaching may reflect the direct influence lecturers have on their learning outcomes.

To offer a more detailed analysis, the assurance dimension, which evaluates the competence and credibility of academic staff and institutional leadership, was examined across the four universities. Students with scores of 3.41 or higher were classified as "satisfied," while those scoring 3.40 or below were classified as "dissatisfied." At Andalas University, 100% of students (9 out of 9) expressed satisfaction regarding assurance. UIN Padang showed a high satisfaction rate of approximately 93.3% (14 out of 15), with 6.7% dissatisfied. UIN Bukittinggi achieved full satisfaction, with 100% (8 out of 8) of students

satisfied. UIN Batusangkar recorded a satisfaction level of 75% (6 out of 8), with 25% dissatisfied, indicating some concerns related to the perceived competence and reliability of staff and leadership at this institution.

Given the results, it is clear that universities in West Sumatra should continue to focus on improving both leadership and teaching standards. While academic leadership provides a broader framework for service delivery, it is the lecturers' ability to engage and support students effectively that plays a more significant role in shaping overall satisfaction. Therefore, universities must ensure that both dimensions—leadership and teaching quality—are continuously improved to meet students' expectations and ensure a high standard of academic service (Zhang et al., 2013).

Satisfaction Index on Overall Dimension

The overall satisfaction index of Thai students regarding academic services across four universities in West Sumatra revealed generally high satisfaction levels. As shown in Figure 7, the highest satisfaction score was recorded at Andalas University (UNAND) with a score of 4.14, followed by UIN Bukittinggi (3.98), UIN Padang (3.97), and UIN Batusangkar (3.74). These findings suggest that all four universities performed well in maintaining academic service quality. The overall high satisfaction reflects effective adaptations to online learning and continued student support.

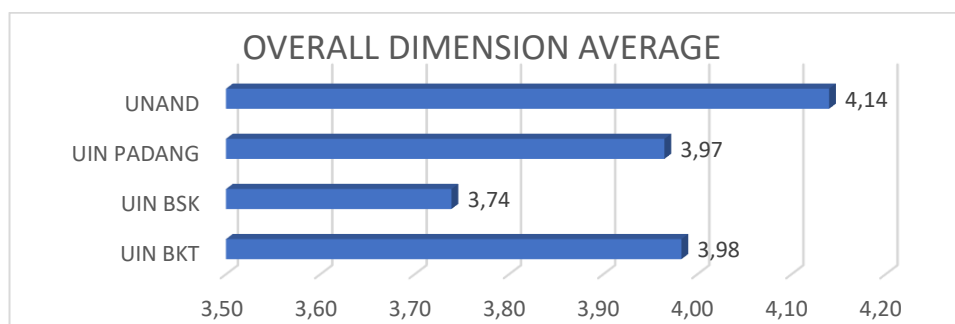


Figure 7. Satisfaction Index on Overall Dimension Average

The results of this study align with previous research, which highlights the critical role of responsiveness and reliability in shaping student satisfaction during transitions to online education (Adiyanta, 2019; Haryadi & Selviani, 2021). UNAND's slightly higher satisfaction score may reflect better responsiveness and the perceived reliability of academic services, particularly in terms of service delivery and infrastructure. This underscores the importance of these factors in ensuring that students feel supported, especially in the context of distance learning.

Although the universities all achieved high satisfaction levels, the slight differences in satisfaction scores suggest that students' perceptions of service quality varied depending on the institution. This variation, while not drastic, points to areas where some universities may need to improve to provide a more consistent experience for their students. For example, while UNAND received the highest score, UIN Batusangkar's score was relatively lower, indicating potential gaps in service delivery that could be addressed to better meet students' needs during times of crisis.

Overall, the study reveals that while satisfaction levels were high across the board, small but meaningful differences in student perceptions remain. This calls for targeted improvements in specific areas, such as service responsiveness and infrastructure, to

ensure that all students have access to equally high-quality academic services. These findings reinforce the need for continuous evaluation and enhancement of academic services, particularly in ensuring that service quality remains consistent and meets students' expectations, regardless of institutional challenges (Suroto et al., 2016; Twum & Peprah, 2020; Weerasinghe et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated Thai students' satisfaction with academic services at universities in West Sumatra. Overall, satisfaction levels were high across all four universities, with Andalas University (UNAND) scoring the highest. The study focused on five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance. Results showed that while academic services met students' needs, there were variations in service quality, particularly in areas such as convenience, service speed, and teaching quality.

The analysis revealed that UNAND excelled in service availability and responsiveness, while UIN Batusangkar and UIN Padang faced challenges in service comfort and speed. These gaps suggest a need for improvements in online platforms and service delivery. The study also highlighted the importance of balancing empathy with comfort, as students' access to services was often caught up despite the empathy shown. In conclusion, continuous evaluation and improvement of academic services are essential for universities to meet students' expectations and provide a high-quality experience.

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