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The Impact of Educational Quality on Student Satisfaction: The Role of Student Experience in Postgraduate Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of educational quality on student satisfaction through student experience among postgraduate students at public universities. Few studies have explicitly focused on the learning experience of postgraduate students, indicating the need for further research in this area. This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal research design. Data were collected through a survey of 213 postgraduate students from public universities selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results show that educational quality significantly affects student experience, and student experience significantly affects student satisfaction. Furthermore, student experience was found to mediate the relationship between educational quality and student satisfaction. This study highlights the importance of student experience for postgraduate students. The implications emphasize the need for higher education institutions to improve the technical aspects of educational quality, such as learning resources and facilities, as well as technology infrastructure, to enhance the learning experience of postgraduate students.

INTRODUCTION

In the current fast-paced environment, the quality of education has become a central concern for academic institutions, policymakers, and students alike. Educational quality in higher education is essential as it directly impacts students' intellectual development, career preparedness, and long-term contributions to society (Abidin, 2021). High-quality education cultivates critical thinking, innovation, and adaptability, skills that are indispensable in the contemporary job market. It also ensures graduates are knowledgeable, ethically grounded, and socially responsible. Educational quality in higher education means meeting established standards and providing a learning environment that supports student success. Educational quality encompasses various dimensions, including curriculum relevance, teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and assessment practices (Ahmed et al., 2022). These dimensions collectively contribute to the learning experience and outcomes for students. Educational quality goes beyond academic achievement; it includes nurturing students' critical thinking, problem-

solving abilities, and ethical judgment. As the global job market evolves, employers value these skills more. This affirms the importance of universities and colleges emphasizing quality in curriculum design and teaching approaches.

The quality of higher education reflects an institution's ability to meet established standards and provide a learning environment that supports student success. This quality can be assessed through various indicators, such as faculty qualifications, student-to-faculty ratios, and the availability of resources (Susanti, 2020). The competence and capabilities of qualified faculty members are closely linked to improved student learning outcomes. Furthermore, accreditation bodies are critical as quality assurance mechanisms that ensure institutions meet specific benchmarks. Accredited institutions are generally more likely to deliver education that aligns with the needs of both students and society.

Educational quality plays a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences throughout the higher education process. A supportive academic environment is crucial in forming a positive student experience, as a psychologically and intellectually encouraging atmosphere helps students feel more comfortable during the learning process. Support from competent faculty members is an essential factor that fosters positive student experiences. Furthermore, access to adequate facilities and resources such as libraries, laboratories, learning technologies, and other support services contributes to an optimal learning experience (Azma, 2019). Student experience holds a vital place in higher education, as it reflects the extent to which an institution meets the needs, expectations, and aspirations of its students.

Student experience encompasses all dimensions of a learner's engagement within an educational institution, including academic, social, and extracurricular activities. It is a comprehensive concept that integrates the quality of teaching, the availability and condition of campus facilities, student support services, and the overall environment in which students learn and develop. Student experience extends beyond classroom activities, including interactions with faculty, administrative staff, and fellow students. When students feel engaged and adequately supported, students are more likely to persist in academic pursuits (Ivanova et al., 2020). Moreover, a positive student experience is associated with higher graduation rates, a critical performance indicator for higher education institutions. Universities that offer strong support systems and foster an active campus community tend to achieve greater student satisfaction, contributing to improved student retention. Additionally, student experience has become an increasingly important factor in attracting prospective students. Institutions that prioritize and enhance student experience are often perceived as more attractive and desirable places to study, leading to increased enrollment numbers.

Educational quality is fundamental in shaping student satisfaction within higher education institutions. Quality education is not limited to effective teaching but encompasses comprehensive support systems, modern facilities, and a positive learning environment that collectively enhance students' academic and personal development. However, in the context of Indonesia, the quality of education, particularly at the postgraduate level, remains insufficiently measured and understood. When institutions maintain high educational standards, students are more likely to feel valued, supported, and motivated, contributing directly to the satisfaction (Pramono et al., 2023). Student satisfaction is a crucial indicator of institutional performance and effectiveness, reflecting how well the educational experience meets learners' expectations and needs. Student satisfaction refers to the extent to which students feel that educational experiences meet expectations. It encompasses various dimensions, including academic quality, campus facilities, support services, and social life (Maltsev & Repetskiy, 2020). Dinh et al., (2021) has shown that student satisfaction is a critical indicator of the quality of an educational institution. Understanding the factors influencing student satisfaction is vital for enhancing the quality of higher education. Key components include teaching effectiveness, curriculum relevance, and the availability of support services. Teaching quality is a primary determinant of student satisfaction, underscoring the need for investment in faculty development and teaching resources (Khan et al., 2022). Curriculum alignment with real-world applications significantly shapes student perceptions, reflecting growing demands for career-oriented education. Support services, such as

academic advising and mental health resources, also play a critical role. These services substantially impact satisfaction levels. Student satisfaction is linked to greater academic engagement and improved academic outcomes. Moreover, institutions with high satisfaction rates often demonstrate better retention and graduation rates. Therefore, prioritizing student feedback and continuous improvement is essential for fostering a positive and effective learning environment.

The novelty of this research lies in examining the relationship between educational quality and student satisfaction through student experience, specifically within postgraduate education. Previous studies have examined educational quality or student satisfaction separately for example Beloucif et al., (2022) and Prakash (2018), but few have studied student experience as a link between them for postgraduate students. There remains a limited body of research examining the quality of education at the postgraduate level, as most studies tend to focus on undergraduate education. In general, the quality of education is more commonly investigated within the context of primary and secondary schooling. Nevertheless, addressing educational quality is a critical issue at every level of education. This study fills that gap by addressing the unique needs and experiences of postgraduate students, which are different from those of undergraduates. The urgency of this research stems from the growing demand for improved quality in postgraduate education, driven by increasing student expectations and global academic competition. As postgraduate students invest significant time and resources into education, institutions need to ensure high satisfaction to maintain academic standards and institutional reputation.

METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative research methodology, involving the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, test hypotheses, and explore relationships among variables (Cohen et al., 2017). The quantitative approach facilitates objective measurement and statistical evaluation, making it well-suited for assessing the strength and direction of associations between factors. Furthermore, a causal research design was employed to investigate cause-and-effect relationships by examining the influence of one variable on another. This design is particularly appropriate for evaluating the impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable through a mediating factor (Shield, 2013). Specifically, the study examined educational quality as the independent variable, student satisfaction as the dependent variable, and student experience as the mediating variable. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents from postgraduate programs at public universities. The sample consisted of 213 postgraduate students who were actively enrolled and directly engaged with academic services. Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire designed to measure key constructs including educational quality, student experience, and student satisfaction, utilizing Likert-scale items adapted from validated instruments. Indicators of educational quality are adapted from Snijders et al., (2018), student experience from Bavlı (2023), and student satisfaction from Kanwar & Sanjeeva (2022). Together, these elements offer a foundation for evaluating postgraduate education. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), chosen for its capacity to manage complex models involving multiple variables and its appropriateness for both exploratory and predictive research (Hair et al., 2017). The analysis proceeded in two stages, initially assessing the measurement model to confirm construct validity and reliability, then evaluating the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study involved a comprehensive data analysis using both outer model and inner model assessments. The outer model evaluation was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments, including tests for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability for each research construct. Once the measurement model met the criteria for

validity and reliability, the analysis proceeded to the inner model assessment to evaluate the causal relationships between variables, including the significance of path coefficients and the strength of relationships among constructs. The validity testing results are presented in Table 1, which displays the factor loading values.

Table 1. Loading Factor Result

Indicator	Educational Quality	Student Experience	Student Satisfaction
EQ1	0.927		
EQ2	0.933		
EQ3	0.909		
EQ4	0.788		
SE1		0.96	
SE2		0.966	
SE3		0.959	
SS1			0.946
SS2			0.947
SS3			0.949
SS4			0.947

As presented in Table 1, all indicators for each construct exhibit factor loading values exceeding 0.70, which meets the minimum threshold for establishing convergent validity. The highest loading was observed for indicator SE2 (0.966) within the Student Experience construct, while the lowest was recorded for indicator EQ4 (0.788) within the Educational Quality construct. These results confirm that all indicators are valid measures of respective constructs, thereby supporting the appropriateness of the measurement instrument for subsequent analysis. Reliability testing was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the constructs. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Educational Quality	0.912	0.939	0.794
Student Experience	0.959	0.974	0.925
Student Satisfaction	0.962	0.972	0.898

All variables were found to be reliable based on the values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, as both measures exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70. This indicates that the instrument employed in this study demonstrates internal consistency. Overall, the outer model assessment results, including both validity and reliability testing, confirm that all indicators are valid and reliable. These findings affirm that the measurement instrument satisfies the required psychometric properties, thereby ensuring that the structural model is appropriate for further analysis.

Table 3. Coefficient Determination

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Student Experience	0.744	0.743
Student Satisfaction	0.886	0.885

As presented in Table 3, the R^2 value for the Student Experience construct is 0.744, while that for Student Satisfaction is 0.886. These values indicate that the model accounts for 74.4% of the variance in Student Experience and 88.6% in Student Satisfaction, reflecting a strong explanatory power and a

well-fitting structural model. Figure 1 depicts the structural framework and the relationships among variables, with a more detailed summary of the results in Tables 4 and 5.

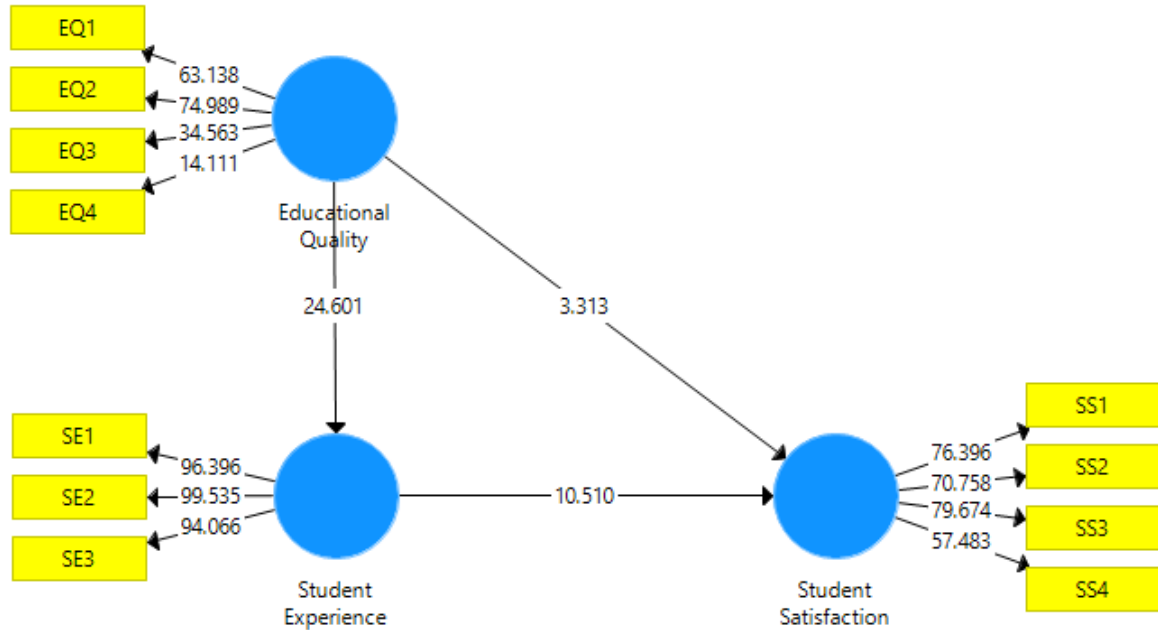


Fig 1. Research Framework

The results of the direct effect analysis are presented in Table 4, while the indirect effects are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4. Direct Effect Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Educational Quality → Student Experience	0.863	0.862	0.035	24.601	0.000
Educational Quality → Student Satisfaction	0.231	0.236	0.07	3.313	0.001
Student Experience → Student Satisfaction	0.735	0.729	0.07	10.510	0.000

Table 4 presents the results of the direct effect analysis, indicating that Educational Quality has a positive and statistically significant influence on Student Experience ($\beta = 24.601$, $p < 0.001$), as well as on Student Satisfaction ($\beta = 3.313$, $p = 0.001$). Furthermore, Student Experience significantly and positively affects Student Satisfaction ($\beta = 10.510$, $p < 0.001$). These findings highlight the critical role of both Educational Quality and Student Experience in shaping student satisfaction.

Table 5. Indirect Effect Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Educational Quality → Student Experience → Student Satisfaction	0.634	0.628	0.058	10.924	0.000

The results of the indirect effect analysis reveal a positive and statistically significant mediating effect of student experience in the relationship between educational quality and student satisfaction ($\beta = 10.924$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that Student Experience serves as a partial mediator, suggesting that the impact of educational quality on student satisfaction is conveyed both directly and indirectly through student experience.

Discussion

This study found that educational quality significantly influences student experience, particularly at the postgraduate level. The analysis indicates that educational quality encompassing faculty competence, curriculum relevance, teaching methods, and availability of academic resources plays a critical role in shaping postgraduate students' learning experiences. These findings suggest that students who perceive high-quality academic services are more motivated, actively engaged in learning, and comfortable within the academic environment. Consistent with these results, Carriazo Diaz et al., (2020) assert that teaching quality and institutional support are key factors in fostering positive student experiences. Furthermore, Heinrich & Green (2020) emphasize that students who perceive higher teaching quality report greater satisfaction and academic engagement. Enhancing educational quality impacts academic achievement and plays an essential role in creating a meaningful learning experience for students. The results indicate that the developed quality management model, which integrates elements such as quality control, quality assurance, quality audit, quality assessment, quality enhancement, and quality management, positively influences the student experience (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). These findings reinforce the importance of quality improvement strategies in higher education institutions as part of efforts to establish a student-centered learning environment.

This research also found that educational quality directly affects student satisfaction at the postgraduate level. Students who rate the educational quality of the institution highly also express satisfaction with the learning experience. This satisfaction reflects fulfilling academic expectations and needs throughout studies. In line with this, Tadle et al., (2021) demonstrated that students' perceptions of educational quality are a primary determinant of student satisfaction, especially in higher education. Abidin (2021) also reports that institutions focusing on improving teaching quality and services tend to achieve higher student satisfaction rates. This confirms that student satisfaction depends not only on academic outcomes but also on the educational process itself is conducted and experienced.

The study identified that student experience significantly impacts student satisfaction among postgraduate students. These findings align with research Lyz' et al., (2022) which indicates that students' academic and non-academic experiences during studies substantially influence satisfaction levels. Similarly, Yawson & Yamoah (2020) highlight personal support, access to facilities, and campus involvement as direct contributors to student satisfaction. Student experience is thus regarded as a crucial component of strategies aimed at improving the quality of academic services. This study revealed that student experience mediates the relationship between educational quality and student satisfaction. The experiences students undergo during coursework subsequently foster a sense of satisfaction with institution. Supporting this, Felix et al., (2023) found that students' perceptions of educational quality indirectly affect satisfaction through the learning experiences encountered. Additionally, Tadle et al., (2021) assert that academic service quality and interactions within the campus environment contribute to creating memorable student experiences, which ultimately enhance satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of educational institutions focusing on the technical aspects of educational quality and how this quality translates into tangible experiences directly perceived by students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examines the impact of educational quality on student satisfaction, with student experience serving as a mediating variable, among postgraduate students at a public university. The findings show

that educational quality has a significant effect on student experience and also influences student satisfaction. This indicates that student experience acts as a partial mediator in the relationship. The results highlight the importance of educational quality in shaping student experience and satisfaction at the postgraduate level. The study further confirms that, in this context, the learning experience is a critical component, emphasizing the need to strengthen it throughout the academic process. Therefore, higher education institutions, particularly at the postgraduate level, should expand focus beyond curriculum content and faculty qualifications to adopt a more holistic approach to enhancing the student experience. A key practical implication of this study is the need to improve the delivery of responsive academic services to ensure adequate student support, particularly through digital platforms. Moreover, providing adequate learning facilities is essential to enable access to quality research and reputable academic journals.

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