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University Recreational Facilities Service Quality and Students' Physical Activity Level

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Abstract

Service quality of recreational facilities is an important factor in attracting people to get involved in physical activities such as fitness training, outdoor recreation and sports. This study aims to examine the relationship between university recreational facilities service quality and students' physical activity level. 390 university students (n = 390) from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Universiti Tenaga Nasional and National Defence University of Malaysia participated in the study. The instruments used were International Physical Activity Questionnaire-Short Form and Service Quality survey. The questionnaire used was based on three main dimensions that represented service quality, namely, ambience of the facility, operations quality and competency of the staff. The items were measured using the Likert scale in which one (1) represented 'poor' and five (5) represented 'excellent'. The overall service quality was measured by calculating the mean score for each dimension and the grand mean of all items. The data was analyzed using Spearman Correlation. The findings indicated that there was no significant relationship between service quality and physical activity level $p = 0.312$ ($p > 0.05$). Thus, service quality did not affect the level of physical activity of the students. However, there was evidence indicating that the universities were still lacking in recreational facilities and quality operation - factors that could attract the students to be physically active.

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1. Introduction

A recreational facility is defined as any facility that provides at least 1 physical activity opportunity to an individual to engage in, for example weightlifting or yoga (Baker, Schootman, Kelly & Barnished, 2008). University recreational facilities are important in order to avoid student's physical inactivity. According to Reed (2007), the designing of university infrastructure, including the location of recreational physical activity facilities, could be related with the physical activity patterns of university students.

Despite the existence of recreational facilities in universities, some of the students did not fully utilise the facilities. Fullerton (2011) stated that while universities are allocating large financial resources for the development athletic and recreational sport facilities, university students are not taking a full advantage of the services provided. This scenario could either suggest that the university community is not physically active or they may just choose to use facilities provided by privately-owned sports and recreation centres.

Some universities are lacking in facilities especially for those that are faced with limited financial resources. Some of sections of the female student population may show reluctance when compelled to share the facilities with the male students for moral reasons. Female students may experience a general feeling of discomfort sharing a gymnasium that is fully occupied by male students. In a similar vein, the equipment provided by the university may have been of much inferior quality compared to that provided by most privately-owned sports and recreation centres. As a result, most of the students preferred to use the services of these private facility providers even if they had to pay for these services. The universities too, may lack efficiency in managing their facilities especially with regard to good maintenance and cleanliness of existing facilities while such things as booking arrangements are mired with unnecessary bureaucratic procedures.

Baker et al. (2008) also stated that the nearness of public recreation facilities such as playgrounds and recreational facilities has been found to affect physical activity behaviour in a positive way. This shows that the availability of recreational facilities has the potential to attract people to be more physically active. The existence of recreational facilities in a university helps to create a healthy community of students who not only excel academically but are also physically active.

Allen and Ross (2013) reported that students generally have clear expectations about the quality of health care, fitness and wellness services and this helps them reap the full benefits of their educational experience. Service quality is vital due to the fact that quality is a yardstick oftentimes used to evaluate the performance of an organization and the services it provides. According to Saini and Matta (2014), the consequences of service quality such as customer satisfaction and re-visit intention are two of the most important indicators of organizational performance at present. Mehta (2011) reported that service quality is strongly associated with loyalty and continuity to visit. Providing quality service is also one of the factors that can attract people to use the facility or the services provided. Bae and Cha (2014) stated that it is gradually necessary to provide greater services that meet the demands of users, while encouraging new customers to use the services.

University students are future leaders who are set to take the place rightful place in society as front-runners in the business and public sector as well as sports organisations. Youth development through sports education has been the concern of many people including educators, coaches and family members (Yigiter, Sari, Ulusoy & Soyer, 2011). Physical activity such as sport can help young people to develop important values for continuous self-improvement. Involvement in sports provides them with the opportunity for interaction while enabling them to reap the full benefits of physical activity. Therefore, students may well be actively involved any form of recreational activity in order that they be more physically active.

According to Tirodimos, Georgouvie, Savvala, Karanika and Noukari (2009), university students are technically in the final stage of their formal education life cycle through which they can develop healthy behaviours. This means that university students need to develop a healthy lifestyle before they start working by which time they would be less inclined to be physically active. Students who develop their physically active lifestyle may be able to maintain a positive perspective on the benefits of engaging in physical activity. Being physically active is most likely to benefit a person greatly while being physically inactive would most likely yield the least benefit. Anokye, Pokhrel, Buxton and Fox-Rushby (2011), stated that physical inactivity is a major community health concern as it is related with about 20 health problems including coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke and is graded among the top ten leading causes of death in high-income nations. Lifestyle factors, such as a poor diet and physical

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