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Assessing student affairs and services: A catalyst for enhancing quality

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Abstract

This study examines graduate student perceptions of the importance and effectiveness of Student Affairs and Services (SAS) at Kalinga State University's College of Advanced Studies to identify service quality gaps and areas for improvement. A descriptive mixed-methods study was conducted through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with 353 graduate students from six programs during the academic years 2023 and 2024. Quantitative data were evaluated using descriptive statistics (weighted means), while qualitative data were interpreted through thematic analysis. Results indicate moderate importance and satisfaction ratings with all services under student welfare (priority: 4.43, satisfaction: 3.81), student development (4.42, 4.01), and institutional programs (4.26, 3.86). The highest-ranked priorities included information and orientation services, leadership training, and admissions services. Major concerns outlined were insufficient cleanliness of spaces, limited staffing on weekends, unclean toilets, and low-quality food services. While the university functions within a service framework, SAS effectiveness needs to improve from a moderate range of service quality to a graduate student-determined expectation of high service benchmarks. Strategic policy changes were recommended, such as enhanced servicing for the maintenance of facilities, expanded staffing for weekend services, improved systems for water supply delivery, and stronger governance to regulate program execution.

Keywords: Academic Support Services, Educational Administration, Graduate Education, Higher Education, Institutional Enhancement, Service Quality, Student Affairs, Student Development, Student Satisfaction, Student Welfare.

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1. Introduction

Tackling the new normal brings unprecedented challenges for student affairs and services in higher education. One of these issues is the moral and ethical criticism of the campus culture, coupled with the expansion of online learning, technological advancements, shifting student populations, increasing concerns regarding the value proposition of education,

and growing expectations for value and outcomes [1]. Further sociopolitical issues such as multiculturalism, personal responsibility, and equal opportunity also greatly influence the institution of higher education [2]. The decisions made to respond to these issues constitute determining factors for our involvement in the higher education landscape. There is no mistaking a decision for professionals in student affairs and services to be engaged in the work: stay on the periphery and hope to be sheltered from the chaos of change.

In the Philippines, CHED (Commission on Higher Education) has set policies that outline which student services may be organized into specific sectors [1]. Student Welfare Programs and Services include generic services that facilitate the health and well-being of students, such as admission services, information, orientation, scholarship programs, health care, guidance and counseling, food services, employment services, basic safety and security, student discipline, and housing. Student Development Programs and Services strive to enhance the capabilities and social responsibility of students through engagement in student-administered organizations, governance, leadership workshops, publications, sporting activities, cultural programs, and community engagements. Institutional Programs and Services deal with the administrative and infrastructural approaches needed to serve the student functions in a beneficial manner.

Kalinga State University acknowledges that learning goes beyond teaching. Thus, the institution deploys a wide array of student services and programs aimed at improving a student's life and ensuring holistic development [3]. This centers on the well-being and development of students and guarantees that the students are sheltered and nurtured within the institution. The university promotes personal development through counseling, career guidance, and other services, enabling students to acquire crucial competencies for the future. Kalinga State University also supports and actively encourages student participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, cultural, and community events [3]. These enable students to acquire leadership and social skills, as well as make a meaningful contribution to society.

Despite the comprehensive framework of student affairs and services established by higher education institutions, concerns persist regarding the quality and effectiveness of these services, particularly in meeting the evolving needs of graduate students. The adequacy of current service delivery models in addressing the specific requirements of graduate-level education remains questionable, with potential gaps existing between institutional offerings and student expectations.

Within this institutional framework, there is a striking absence of research focused specifically on the perceptions of service quality among graduate students, who tend to hold different needs and expectations than their undergraduate peers. Earlier assessments seem to have concentrated on evaluating undergraduate services [4]. However, the College of Advanced Studies represents a different demographic with particular patterns of service use. This gap in understanding graduate student perspectives on service quality presents a significant limitation in the current body of knowledge, particularly in the Philippine higher education context where limited empirical evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of student affairs and services programs specifically designed for graduate-level education.

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate systematically the satisfaction of graduate students with university services within the areas of student welfare, student development, and institutional programs at Kalinga State University's College of Advanced Studies. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) assess graduate students' perceptions of the importance of various student affairs and services offered by the university; (2) measure graduate students' satisfaction levels with current student welfare, development, and institutional programs; (3) identify specific areas requiring improvement in service delivery based on student feedback; and (4) propose strategic policy recommendations for enhancing the quality of student affairs and services.

The study addresses the following research questions: What are the graduate students' perceptions regarding the importance of student affairs and services offered by Kalinga State University's College of Advanced Studies? What is the level of satisfaction among graduate students with the current student welfare programs, student development programs, and institutional programs and services? What specific recommendations can be formulated to improve the quality and effectiveness of student affairs and services for graduate students?

The results will support apportioning decisive and policy-oriented resources behind planning university services. To achieve these objectives, this study employed a descriptive mixed-methods approach, utilizing total enumeration sampling of 353 graduate students across six programs in the College of Advanced Studies. Data collection involved validated questionnaires measuring both perceived importance and satisfaction levels, supplemented by semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (weighted means), while qualitative findings underwent thematic analysis to provide comprehensive insights into graduate student experiences with university services.

2. Literature Review

The research literature related to student affairs and services in higher education has developed over the past few decades, with studies focusing on the dimensions of service quality, student satisfaction, and institutional effectiveness. In this subsection, relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings related to the study of graduate students' perceptions of student affairs and services will be presented.

2.1. Student Affairs and Services: Conceptual Foundations

Higher education institutions are encouraged to investigate Student Assistance Services programs, with findings to be shared and utilized for improvement [1]. This directive forms the basis for ongoing evaluation and enhancement of student services throughout Philippine higher education. The Manual on Student Affairs Services and Programs in Higher Education, created by the International Association of Student Affairs and Services Professionals (IASAS), defines the central purpose of SAS in higher education: meeting students' essential personal needs through diverse extracurricular offerings [5]. These

programs aim to enable students to better focus on academic work and personal development, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes.

Ciobanu [6] argued that student services aid in enhancing students' experiences in higher education by explaining how such services are important to a student's retention and academic achievement. This argument serves the purpose of justifying the misconception of student affairs services as subordinate functions of an institution's effectiveness.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission on Higher Education developed guidelines for Student Affairs and Services Programs [2], establishing a framework for service provision amid unprecedented circumstances. The satisfaction survey instrument utilized in this research was proposed within these guidelines. The pandemic has shown the increasing impact of inadequate mental support on students. Kutat et al. [7] conducted a comprehensive survey of students' satisfaction with student affairs and services offered at Western Philippines University and reported moderate satisfaction in many of the service areas offered. Their results pointed to the need for ongoing evaluation and modification of SAS programs in response to students' demands, especially in the post-pandemic education system.

2.2. Regulatory Framework and Policy Implementation

The regulatory framework for SAS implementation is included in CHED Memorandum Order 21, series of 2006 [1]. This regulation balances information between learners, higher education institutions, and the outcomes to be achieved with regard to program inputs, processes, and outputs. These guidelines illustrate the relationships that are drawn between institutional policies and students' education.

Mercado et al. [8] conducted a comprehensive policy study on student affairs and services among selected higher education institutions in Bulacan, providing valuable insights into the implementation of CHED guidelines. Their research highlighted the importance of systematic evaluation and policy-oriented approaches to improve service delivery in Philippine higher education institutions. The study revealed significant variations in implementation across institutions, suggesting the need for more standardized approaches to service delivery.

Understanding these contextual issues, CHED published CMO 21 in 2006, which set up the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Programs [1]. This policy framework mandates all institutions to adopt unified SAS programming, which sets minimum service standards aimed at improving the need for quality, accessibility, efficiency, effectiveness, student development, and compliance. This condition strengthens the uniform approach to enable structured assessment of program outcome retrieval.

2.3. Historical Evolution and Contemporary Practice

The idea of student affairs emerged from the function of teaching. Traditionally, the *in loco parentis* approach placed teachers in the dual role of teaching and protecting the children in their care. This idea has roots in English common law traditions. In the 17th century, both Oxford and Cambridge had strict behavior control over their students. So did American colleges and universities. They also took moral charge of the students, and most of the college presidents, who were usually clergymen, stressed the moral development of the students.

The student population evolved over time to include a larger number of women participating in higher education. Faculty members who previously took care of student welfare began to seek outside help with their non-teaching and non-auxiliary duties, stemming from a lack of experience with student services administration. This change facilitated the development of student affairs as a new substantive area. These specific personnel were made responsible for the traditional services of boarding and dining, as well as the more modern responsibilities of health and hygiene. As noted by Tejido [9], Philippine student affairs function predominantly through an *in loco parentis* system, which is legally designed to cater to the needs of its comparatively younger students vis-à-vis European and American students.

By 2007, most of the 2,016 Philippine higher education institutions had created student affairs units under different names. During an international meeting sponsored by IASAS and UNESCO, Villanueva [5] stated that the primary purpose of these units is to facilitate the achievement of academic and research objectives of the institutions and their respective missions. The list of student affairs programs is vast: development programs, counseling, healthcare, food services, housing, academic assistance, aid for international students, publishing, career services, nursing supervision, discipline control, and activity coordination. In the Philippines, there is no single academically recognized model for the administration of student affairs. Governance is institutionally specific. Normally, the directors of student affairs report to a vice president or chancellor, which places them at an intermediate level in the hierarchy of the institution.

2.4. Service Quality and Student Satisfaction Research

The services provided in higher education have been studied over the years, with great attention given to different aspects of student service satisfaction and service efficacy. Onditi and Wechuli [10] conducted an extensive review of literature on service quality and student satisfaction in higher education institutions, pinpointing critical elements that shape student perceptions regarding service quality. Their review showed that service quality is multidimensional, including tangible aspects such as facilities, service reliability, staff responsiveness, assured competence, and empathy in service delivery.

Sison [4] devised an evaluation form for student affairs and services programs that focused on quality enhancement, which was also the basis of the survey instrument of this research. Sison underscores that systematic assessment serves to identify gaps for further servicing and planned strategic intervention as a shifting point in a region of a triangle of a multi-dimensional measure of importance, satisfaction, and other serviced categories.

The literature on individual components of service has developed some level of understanding of the effectiveness of student affairs. Kavutha et al. [11] studied the effect of orientation services on the academic performance of secondary school

students and established that orientation programs and institutional frameworks significantly influence student success and their integration into the institution. The study showed that adequate orientation services positively correlated with subsequent academic performance.

Similarly, Kuranchie and Affum [12] investigated the cultivation of student leadership with respect to training and its impact on student leaders, showing the role of such programs in student affairs. Their analysis revealed that these students significantly improved their leadership skills as a result of the training, and their personal development grew in other areas.

2.5. Specific Service Domains in the Literature

The study of various service components has been beneficial for understanding service quality and leading practices. Pajantoy and Ubane [13] performed a thorough evaluation of the canteen services in Catarman Central Schools, establishing food service quality standards as well as the determinants of satisfaction among students regarding food services. The study underscored the pivotal role of nutritional status, selection, pricing, and cleanliness in overall satisfaction.

Lunenburg [14] discussed school guidance and counseling services, underlining their importance as student support services for school and college success. The study contributed to understanding the multifaceted dimensions of counseling services by structuring them into academic counseling, personal counseling, and career development, which form integrated student affairs.

Using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, Suleiman et al. [15] studied the role of admission services and extracurricular activities in the academic performance of secondary school students. Their study found that effective admission procedures and active participation in extracurricular services had significant positive relationships with higher academic performance, thus proving that the relationships among different components of student affairs are interdependent.

2.6. Theoretical Framework: Lewin's Theory of Change

This research is based on Lewin's Theory of Change, particularly in relation to change within institutions. This approach posits that change develops progressively and does not happen in a single event. Everyone needs to go through several steps to finally accept change. In the context of educational settings, members tend to adapt to change only when the purpose is adequately and clearly stated. In general, the process of change is composed of three major components: driving forces, restraining forces, and equilibrium.

Stimuli provoke distinct behavioral reactions and responses. Some learning theorists suggest that behavior change is an integral phase of the learning process. Behavior change is a response to stimuli in the environment. In the framework of this study, the design and delivery of student affairs programs serve as stimuli that produce individual and organizational responses, facilitating change at both levels.

2.7. Conceptual Framework and Research Gaps

The conceptual framework that this study employs uses a logic model analyzing satisfaction as impacted by the three service categories: welfare, development, and institutional programs. This model, adapted from prior work [8], allows a holistic evaluation of graduate education with perceived importance and satisfaction measurement across all serviced areas. This model posits that these three areas combined determine overall satisfaction, while several constituents within each area affect perceptions of the quality of services offered.

This study's theoretical framework is based on past policy-focused work [8] concerning CMO No. 21's guidelines as cited in [4]. Students' welfare, development, and institutional programs are independent factors rooted in CMO No. 9 (2013), which created policies and standards. The dependent variable, client satisfaction, assesses the outcomes of the SAS program by gauging students' perceptions. The conceptual model illustrates that welfare, development, and institutional services together shape the satisfaction of students with university programs.

There is a great body of literature on Student Affairs and Services; however, the experiences of graduate students within the context of higher education in the Philippines remain a significant gap. There has been ample attention to undergraduate or secondary education research, but attention to graduate students who are often juggling professional work and academic studies is sorely missing. Additionally, recent global issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic have brought forth the need for flexible and proactive student services, which might change the way these services are offered.

The body of literature demonstrates that while there is an extensive body of research dedicated to the affairs and services of students in higher education, there is little to no focus directed towards the gap concerning the graduate population in the Philippines. This research aims to fill this gap by documenting the perceptions of service quality of graduate students regarding their services at the College of Advanced Studies of Kalinga State University toward understanding the impact of services in graduate education.

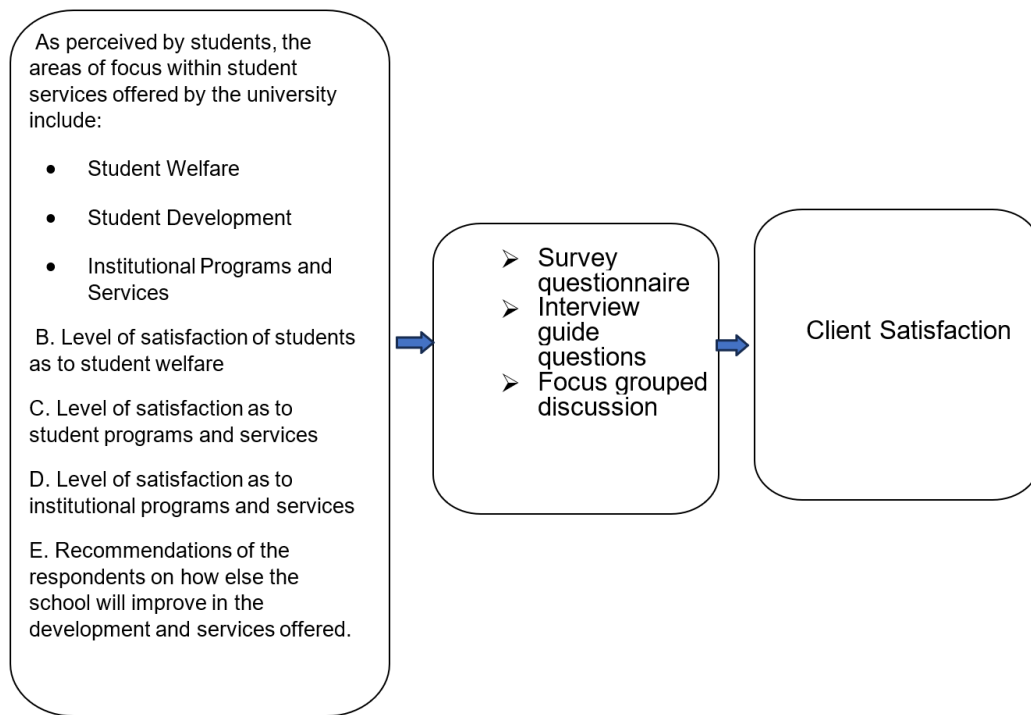


Figure 1.
Conceptual Model of the Study.

This study's theoretical framework is based on past policy-focused work, Mercado et al. [8], concerning CMO No. 21's guidelines as cited in [4]. Students' welfare, development, and institutional programs are independent factors rooted in CMO No. 9 (2013), which created policies and standards. The dependent variable, client satisfaction, assesses the outcomes of the SAS program by gauging students' perceptions. The conceptual model illustrates that welfare, development, and institutional services together shape the satisfaction of students with university programs.

3. Data and Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design, implementing a mixed-methods framework approach to examine the Student Affairs and Services at Kalinga State University's College of Advanced Studies. In this methodological framework, the quantitative assessment of student perceptions was complemented by a qualitative evaluation of their experiences, which facilitated a holistic assessment of graduate students' satisfaction and the derived services.

This approach also enhances prior works with a unique perspective by considering both perceived importance and satisfaction measures simultaneously as a dual-metric framework. Unlike earlier studies such as Sison [4] which centered on satisfaction alone, this approach broadens the understanding of service priorities and performance gaps. Moreover, the collection of qualitative data through interviews and focus groups incorporates aspects that previous studies lacked when solely relying on quantitative methods.

3.1. Research Setting and Participants

The participants of the study were the students from the College of Advanced Studies of Kalinga State University, which comprised six programs: Master of Arts in Education (127 students), Master in Public Administration (65 students), Master of Science in Rural Development (27 students), Master in Business Administration (43 students), Doctor of Philosophy in Development Education (72 students), and Doctor of Philosophy in Community Development (19 students). A total of 353 respondents were gathered.

Total enumeration sampling was utilized to ensure all graduate programs were represented in the sample, thereby capturing the full range of student experiences and perspectives. This method increased the internal validity of the study's findings within the institutional framework.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

The main quantitative tool was a structured questionnaire based on Sison [4] survey tool, which had already been validated. It was specially tailored for the context of graduate programs at Kalinga State University. The survey contained 20 items, two of which were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale:

1. Perceived importance: Rated from 1 (Not a Priority) to 5 (High Priority)
2. Satisfaction level: Rated from 1 (Not Satisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied)

The questionnaire measured the perceptions of students from three service areas: student welfare, student development, and institutional programs and services.

To dig deeper, some students also joined interviews and group discussions. These conversations helped gather more personal stories, suggestions, and experiences that the survey couldn't capture on its own.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were administered to all 353 graduate students during the 2023-2024 academic year. Following the quantitative phase, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with purposively selected participants to explore emerging themes in greater depth. This sequential explanatory approach allowed quantitative findings to guide qualitative inquiry while providing contextual richness to numerical data.

3.4. Data Analysis

The study employed descriptive statistics and weighted means in analyzing quantitative data. Unlike previous studies that used simple means or simple frequency distributions, this study went further in employing weighted means, which are more representative of students' opinions and levels of service importance.

The survey results were analyzed numerically and statistically. For the interviews, the researchers sought overarching patterns and particularly useful concepts put forth by students. Employing both methods contributed to the study's comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and areas for improvement in student services.

Quantitative data were analyzed employing descriptive statistics, in particular, weighted means. The following interpretative scales were employed:

Table 1.

Range and Descriptive Interpretation on the Perceived Priority of the Student Services Offered by the University.

| For Priority Ratings | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Scale | Range | Description | Symbol |
| 5 | 4.50-5.00 | High Priority | HP |
| 4 | 3.50-4.49 | Moderate Priority | MP |
| 3 | 2.50-3.49 | Neutral | N |
| 2 | 1.50-2.49 | Somewhat a Priority | SP |
| 1 | 1.00-1.49 | Not Priority | NP |

Table 2.

Range and Descriptive Interpretation of Student Satisfaction with the Student Services Offered by the University.

| Scale | Range | Description | Symbol |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 5 | 4.50-5.00 | Very Satisfied | VS |
| 4 | 3.50-4.49 | Moderately Satisfied | MS |
| 3 | 2.50-3.49 | Neutral | N |
| 2 | 1.50-2.49 | Somewhat Satisfied | SS |
| 1 | 1.00-1.49 | Not Satisfied | NS |

Qualitative information derived from interviews and discussions was analyzed thematically, highlighting important statements and recurrent themes. The open-ended answers were assigned codes, placed into categories, and merged with quantitative data to enhance the comprehension of students' experiences.

4. Results

4.1. Perceived Priority of Student Services

Table 3.

Perceived priority Student Development and Services Offered by the University by the Students.

| Area | Mean | Description |
|------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------|
| 1. STUDENTS WELFARE | | |
| 1.1 Information and Orientation Services | 4.74 | High Priority |
| 1.2 Guidance and Counseling Services | 4.45 | Moderate Priority |
| 1.3 Students Handbook Development | 4.32 | Moderate Priority |
| 1.4 Alumni Relations | 4.21 | Moderate Priority |
| Sub Area Mean | 4.43 | Moderate Priority |
| 2. STUDENTS DEVELOPMENT | | |
| 2.1 Student Activities | 4.47 | Moderate Priority |
| 2.2 Student Organization and Activities | 4.27 | Moderate Priority |
| 2.3 Leadership Training | 4.6 | High Priority |
| 2.4 Student Council/ Organization | 4.4 | Moderate Priority |
| 2.5 Student Discipline | 4.42 | Moderate Priority |
| 2.6 Student Publication | 4.37 | Moderate Priority |
| Sub Area Mean | 4.42 | Moderate Priority |
| 3. INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES | | |
| 3.1 Admissions Services | 4.55 | High Priority |
| 3.2 Scholarships and Financial Assistance | 4.02 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.3 Food Services | 4.27 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.4 Health Services | 4.35 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.5 Safety and Security Services | 4.47 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.6 Foreign / International Student Services | 3.81 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.7 Services for Students with Needs and PWD | 4.23 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.8 Cultural and Arts Programs | 4.26 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.9 Sports and Development Programs | 4.27 | Moderate Priority |
| 3.10 Social and Community Involvement Programs | 4.35 | Moderate Priority |
| Sub Area Mean | 4.26 | Moderate Priority |
| TAWM | 4.34 | Moderate Priority |

As presented in the table, the average weighted mean gives a score of 4.34, which suggests a moderate priority. This indicates that students from the CAS prioritize the student development services offered by the University of Kalinga State to a moderate extent, acknowledging these services as important in assisting their development as master's and doctorate degree students.

The mean scores for the three sub-areas: student welfare, student development, and institutional programs and services also indicate that all these areas are of moderate priority for the College of Graduate Studies students.

Information and Orientation Services, with an average mean of 4.74; Leadership Training, with an average mean of 4.60; and Admissions Services, with an average mean of 4.55, are all categorized as high priority. This indicates that these services are among the most essential for students and should be prioritized by the university.

These results indicate that graduate students pay attention to the services available to them insofar as the services aid in enhancing their academic performance and professional growth. They help students navigate through programs with ease; admissions services are the important gateway to graduate education. The high prioritization of leadership training suggests the professional growth goals held by graduate students, many of whom pursue academic credentials to improve their career opportunities.

4.2. Satisfaction with Student Welfare Programs

Table 4.

Student Satisfaction in the Student Welfare Program of the School.

| 1. Student Welfare | Mean | Description |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.1 Information and Orientation Services | 4.13 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 1.2 Guidance and Counseling Services | 3.76 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 1.3 Students Handbook Development | 3.68 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 1.4 Alumni Relations | 3.66 | Moderately Satisfied |
| | 3.81 | Moderately Satisfied |

As shown in Table 3, the weighted average mean of 3.81 indicates that graduate students are moderately satisfied with the student welfare services provided by the university. Among the various aspects, "Information and Orientation" received the highest mean score of 4.13, which also falls under the category of moderately satisfied. This can be attributed to the fact that many graduate students come from remote areas. To address this, the university, particularly the Office of University Information and the Student Publication, actively disseminates essential information regarding school matters to ensure stakeholders are well-informed. Additionally, the Guidance Office consistently organizes well-prepared orientation programs for both new and returning students, contributing to the overall satisfaction in this area.

The satisfaction data for student welfare services reveal a consistent pattern of moderate satisfaction across all indicators, with information and orientation services receiving the highest satisfaction rating (4.13). This finding aligns with the priority ratings, where information services were also most highly valued. The relatively lower satisfaction scores for student handbook development (3.68) and alumni relations (3.66) suggest opportunities for service enhancement in these areas, though these scores still fall within the moderately satisfied range.

4.3. Satisfaction with Student Development Programs

Table 5.
Student Satisfaction in the Student Development Programs of the School.

| 2. Students Development | Mean | Description |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 2.1 Student Activities | 3.87 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 2.2 Student Organization and Activities | 4.08 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 2.3 Leadership Training | 3.94 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 2.4 Student Council/ Organization | 4.1 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 2.5 Student Discipline | 4.06 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 2.6 Student Publication | 4.03 | Moderately Satisfied |
| | 4.01 | Moderately Satisfied |

The overall average mean score of 4.01 concerning the student development programs offered indicates 'moderate satisfaction,' which demonstrates a fair level of satisfaction among students in the College of Arts and Sciences. As demonstrated in the table, "Student Council/Organization" received the highest mean of 4.10, followed closely by "Student Organization and Activities" at 4.08, "Student Discipline" at 4.06, and "Student Publication" at 4.03, all remaining in the moderately satisfied range. This suggests that the student leaders are quite proactive in conducting diverse activities and projects. These measures greatly contribute to the development of leadership and discipline among students.

Among the three service categories, student development programs garnered the highest satisfaction rating (4.01). This indicates that graduate students appreciate the university's attempts to help develop their leadership and organizational skills and offer professional advancement opportunities. The higher satisfaction with the student governance structures (4.10) suggests that the graduate students' needs are adequately represented in the university's governance.

Satisfaction with Institutional Programs and Services

Table 6.
Student Satisfaction in the Institutional Programs and Services of the School.

| 3. Institutional Programs and Services | Mean | Description |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 3.1 Admissions Services | 4.44 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3.2 Scholarships and Financial Assistance | 3.69 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3.3 Food Services | 3.55 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3.4 Health Services | 3.58 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3.5 Safety and Security Services | 4.16 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3.6 Foreign / International Student Services | 3.4 | Neutral |
| 3.7 Services for Students with Needs and PWD | 3.94 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3.8 Cultural and Arts Programs | 4.13 | Moderately Satisfied |
| | 3.86 | Moderately Satisfied |

With an overall average mean of 3.86, CAS students are moderately satisfied with the institutional programs and services offered by the university. Admission services received the highest mean of 4.44, which is also interpreted as moderately satisfied. This is largely due to the shift from onsite to online admission processes. Employed CAS students, whether located nearby or in distant areas, now find enrollment more convenient as they can complete transactions through the online portal without needing to visit the campus.

With regard to the institutional programs and services domain, differences in satisfaction levels were noted. Admissions services scored the highest satisfaction rating (4.44) due to the more effective online enrollment system the university had recently put into place. On the other end of the spectrum, foreign/international student services recorded the lowest rating (3.40), which is not even moderately satisfied but rather neutral. The difference draws attention to the institutional gaps as well as areas of focus for development. Student recommendations for service improvement.

Table 7.

Recommendations of the respondents on how else the school will improve in the development and services offered.

| Category | Frequency | % | Rank |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|------|
| A. Student Development | | | |
| 1. Lack of Trainings/workshops for students | 12 | 9.92 | 5 |
| Total | 12 | | |
| B. Institutional Programs and Services | | | |
| 1. Canteen Services | 27 | 22.31 | 2 |
| Poor quality of food and high cost | | | |
| 2. Unavailability of Facilities | 26 | 21.49 | 3 |
| CRs, classrooms, and offices (BAO, Library, Registrar, Accounting Office, Guidance, Medical Unit) | | | |
| 3. Cleanliness of Comfort Rooms | 39 | 32.23 | 1 |
| Insufficient water supply | | | |
| Unsanitary comfort rooms | | | |
| 4. Poor Waste Management | 17 | 14.05 | 4 |
| Unclean surroundings | | | |
| Total | 121 | 100 | |

Students' qualitative feedback revealed several important specific issues and areas for improvement. Students overall voiced facility concerns first, with a lack of water and sanitation in the comfort rooms being the most commonly mentioned issue (32.23% of comments). Food service (22.31%) and limited availability of various facilities (21.49%) were also very frequently mentioned. These services pointed out essential under-construction and maintenance services that required much more institutional attention.

5. Discussion

The results reveal student attitudes concerning the quality of services offered at the College of Advanced Studies of Kalinga State University and highlight some important issues. Firstly, there seems to be a congruence between service prioritization and student satisfaction with a given service, as students reported somewhat positive satisfaction levels with the services they deem most important. This means that the university has, to a certain extent, identified high-priority services and offered them adequately, although a lot of improvement is still necessary in all areas of services.

The findings align with Kutat et al. [7], who reported moderate satisfaction levels across various service domains at Western Philippines University, suggesting that moderate satisfaction ratings may be a common pattern in Philippine higher education institutions. However, they differ from international research as presented by Onditi and Wechuli [10], who reviewed multiple higher learning institutions and reported higher levels of satisfaction with services offered and pointed out how the Philippine system could improve from such studies.

Services such as information and orientation services (4.74), leadership training (4.60), and admissions services (4.55) were highlighted as receiving positive evaluations. This is understandable since most graduate students are fully employed and studying for additional qualifications. Advanced information systems efficiently guide students through the complex curriculum of graduate programs, and streamlined admissions processes are easier to manage at the graduate information level. Additionally, leadership development is aimed at and supports professional growth, which is typically the primary focus of graduate education.

These results corroborate the findings of Kavutha et al. [11], who demonstrated the strong impact designed orientation services have on student success and their academic performance. In the same way, Kuranchie and Affum [12] also showed that specially designed leadership training programs greatly improved students' leadership skills, confirming the prioritization and satisfaction ratings for these services in this study.

The relatively low satisfaction ratings from most other service indicators imply that university services are functioning at only a minimal level. This is particularly alarming in the case of core services such as food (3.55) and health services (3.58), which are critical for the well-being of students. This corroborates the qualitative comments of participants, reinforcing with additional emphasis the infrastructural services, particularly the sanitation facilities and canteen.

The food service satisfaction findings contradict those reported by Pajantoy and Ubane [13], who found that canteen services in central schools of Catarman maintained strict food quality standards and higher satisfaction levels. This disparity suggests that Kalinga State University may benefit from adopting similar quality control measures and service standards implemented in other educational institutions.

Among the mentioned concerns, insufficient water supply and unsanitary comfort rooms received the highest score of 39, indicating a serious problem with the cleanliness of the university comfort rooms. According to the personnel in charge, there is indeed a problem with the sources of water, which cannot supply the entire university, resulting in very dirty and unpleasant restrooms that lead to user dissatisfaction. In an interview with the janitress in charge, additional issues include: some students urinate on the floor, others step on the bowl and do not flush, and there is the dropping of used napkins and tissues in the bowls. With this feedback from students, the administration can use this information to revise strategies, reallocate resources, or enhance staff training.

The identified sanitation problems defy the basic norms of cleanliness expected in schools. Authors Tsige et al. [16] point out that water and sanitation are foundational to education everywhere, with proper facilities constituting a critical element of Sustainable Development Goal 6. The existing facility shortcomings at Kalinga State University not only undermine satisfaction but may also compromise educational attainment by fostering an atmosphere detrimental to learning and overall wellness.

Their research underscores the need for greater water and sanitation measures in educational contexts, aligning with the findings of Tsige et al. [16]. This study further supports these gaps by documenting poor sanitation services as a hindering factor to the educational experience, highlighting the lack of infrastructure and increasing support for the conclusions of previous studies.

The canteen services received a total of 27 complaints regarding the supply, quality, and pricing of food. This indicates considerable dissatisfaction among the respondents. It appears that the existing canteen services are insufficient in meeting the consumers' expectations. Such dissatisfaction is likely to negatively influence the institutional experience, which may, in turn, affect institutional well-being, productivity, and reputation. Should these issues remain unaddressed, the consequences may include loss of consumers, a tarnished institutional image, and escalating frustration among users. On the other hand, there is ample opportunity to improve the situation by better responding to the community's needs through enhanced food quality, appropriate pricing, and consistent food provision.

The food service issues identified in this study differ from those reported by Pajantoy and Ubane [13], where canteen services in other institutions upheld strict food quality standards. Prior research [8] emphasizes that healthy food environments within educational institutions are essential for fostering constructive dietary habits. The current deficiencies in food quality, variety, and affordability at Kalinga State University not only highlight service gaps but also present an opportunity to cultivate healthier eating habits within the academic community.

These findings contrast with those of Mensink et al. [17], who demonstrated that well-implemented school canteen programs can significantly improve both the food environment and student satisfaction. Their research on the Healthy School Canteen Programme offers a model that Kalinga State University could adapt to address current deficiencies in its food services.

Another notable finding pertains to the limited availability of facilities, particularly comfort rooms and administrative offices, during weekends. This lack of access disproportionately affects graduate students, who often attend classes on Saturdays due to weekday work obligations. The mismatch between service availability and the needs of graduate students represents an institutional issue that requires attention at the governance level, rather than being addressed solely through construction or minor design modifications.

This reveals a gap in graduate education that distinguishes it from other educational levels. While prior research, such as that by Suleiman et al. [15] has addressed service delivery within secondary education, it has largely overlooked the impact of service scheduling on graduate students. This study seeks to address that gap by highlighting the importance of aligning services with the actual schedules and needs of the graduate student population.

The 3.40 neutral satisfaction rating for international student services indicates a clear gap in service provision. As the trends of internationalization and globalization in higher education continue to grow, institutions must develop sufficient services to support international students. While the current enrollment of foreign students may be low, the university has the opportunity to attract a more diverse student body by enhancing its international student services.

This aligns with global trends in the internationalization of higher education but contrasts with institutions that already offer comprehensive support services to international students. The neutral rating suggests that while some services exist, they lack the integration and depth characteristic of more advanced international programs, positioning this area as both a challenge and an opportunity for future development.

In summary, the results show that Kalinga State University's College of Advanced Studies has developed a functional service framework for its graduate students; however, several service domains still require refinement to elevate service quality from moderate to high levels. There is strong triangulated evidence from both quantitative satisfaction scores and qualitative feedback supporting the need for targeted improvements in specific priority areas.

The prevailing trend of moderate satisfaction across these service areas mirrors broader patterns in Philippine higher education, as documented in comparable studies [7]. However, the specific concerns raised particularly regarding infrastructure and food services indicate a need for localized, tailored interventions rather than broad systemic reforms.

6. Conclusion

This study offers an understanding of student perceptions regarding the quality of services rendered at Kalinga State University's College of Advanced Studies, identifying institutional strengths alongside areas for improvement. The outputs indicate that the university has been able to implement a working service system; however, service quality has, worryingly, only achieved a moderate level across welfare, development, and institutional services.

The results show that student affairs and services rank as a moderate priority, with an average weighted mean of 4.34. Student development, student welfare, and institutional activities and services all sit in the moderately prioritized grouping, with means of 4.43, 4.42, and 4.26, respectively. Furthermore, all indicators that fall under each category rank as 'moderately prioritized.'

In the area of student welfare for CAS students, the level of satisfaction is measured with a TAWM of 3.81, which indicates a moderate level of satisfaction. All indicators within this category are classified as falling under moderate satisfaction.

In the student development category, as measured by the level of satisfaction, the TAWM is 4.01, which translates to 'moderate satisfaction,' and all the means of the indicators align with this description.

In the institutional programs and services category, it has a TAWM of 3.86, which means students are moderately satisfied. All indicators' means fall under moderately satisfied, except for the indicator on foreign/international student services, which has a mean of 3.40 and is classified as neutral.

Particularly notable is the identification of specific infrastructure challenges, especially regarding sanitation facilities, food services, and weekend facility accessibility. These factors profoundly affect the educational atmosphere and the holistic well-being of students, threatening to diminish the value of their education even if the academic programming is robust. This study also brings to light the servicing concerns of graduate students who have to balance full-time jobs due to their concurrent professional responsibilities and thus prioritize streamlined administration, weekend services, and professionally relevant support.

The study shows that assessing the quality of provided services brings important information for strategic planning and resource distribution. Evaluation of importance and satisfaction in each service area yields crucial results, providing institutional leaders with insights into areas needing prioritization and continued monitoring for change over time. This approach strengthens institutional effectiveness and enhances student success by attending to responsive services.

These results are especially important for colleges and universities that serve graduate students because they show that appropriate models of services should not simply be adapted from existing models based on undergraduate services. With the continued globalization of graduate education, creating appropriately responsive service frameworks becomes a more critical institutional priority.

6.1. Implications

6.1.1. Theoretical Implications

This research enhances the understanding of student affairs and services by applying Lewin's Theory of Change in the context of graduate education. It supports the three-domain model (welfare, development, and institutional services) as a holistic approach to examining graduate program service quality. Assessing service effectiveness through a dual-metric importance vs. satisfaction framework, as applied in this study, contrasts with previous research relying on singular metric frameworks and provides additional theoretical depth.

6.1.2. Practical Implications

The research findings are relevant to strategic planning and policy development in higher education. There is a clear institutional gap concerning facilities' sanitation, food service, and infrastructure that needs addressing and resource allocation. Graduate students' needs and service timing mismatch lead to policy gaps for limited service hours. The moderate satisfaction ratings across all service domains signal systematic challenges that are grounded in comprehensive institutional restructuring.

6.1.3. Policy Implications

The results of the study bolster the rationale for differentiated policies within student affairs that address the specific characteristics of graduate student populations. There seems to be a necessity for modification within the CHED guidelines as they relate to the special conditions of employed graduate students. In this regard, institutions are encouraged to create set standards for services and quality assurance frameworks aimed at graduates that are more tailored to meet the needs of this group.

6.2. Limitations

6.2.1. Methodological Limitations

This study was conducted in a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other higher education institutions in the Philippines or abroad. Additionally, the use of a cross-sectional research design captures perceptions only at a specific point in time, potentially overlooking temporal changes in service quality and satisfaction. The exclusion of perspectives from faculty, staff, and administrators who significantly influence service provision further narrows the scope of insights. Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may have misrepresented their experiences, consciously or unconsciously.

6.2.2. Scope Limitations

Although undergraduate students' comparative insights may have offered valuable context, the study focused exclusively on graduate students. It was also confined to three service domains as defined by CHED, thereby possibly omitting other relevant areas of student services that could influence satisfaction. Furthermore, the study did not examine the correlation between service quality and academic performance, limiting its ability to draw conclusions about the broader academic impact of student affairs services.

6.2.3. Contextual Limitations

The research was conducted during the post-pandemic period, which may have shaped student expectations and affected the delivery modes of various services. Additionally, cultural and regional characteristics specific to Kalinga Province may limit the transferability of the findings to other locations. The students' perceptions of service quality could also have been influenced by the institution's economic challenges and resource constraints during the study period.

6.3. Future Research Recommendations

6.3.1. Comparative Studies

Future research should focus on multi-school studies that investigate the patterns of service quality within and among types of institutions of higher learning across the Philippines. The comparative studies of public versus private institutions and intra-national geographic region comparisons would enhance the understanding of the effectiveness of student affairs. Cross-cultural analysis of Philippine graduate students' experiences in comparison to those of other countries would better serve the understanding of culturally tailored service requirements.

6.3.2. Longitudinal Research

Service improvement strategies and their impact on student satisfaction would be better understood if guided by longitudinal studies analyzing change over time. Graduate students could be tracked through their academic tenure in panel studies to assess how their service requirements and satisfaction shift at different stages of graduate education. The relationship between the quality of student affairs services provided and outcomes realized by graduates post-administration would establish service value through long-term impact studies.

6.3.3. Methodological Changes

Further research on the delicate balance between constituent services and overall satisfaction is best approached using advanced analytics, such as structural equation modeling, which should be prioritized. Graduate students' experiences can also be studied in greater depth using mixed ethnographic methods. Improvements in data quality as well as response rates can be achieved through real-time feedback systems or mobile applications for remote data collection.

6.3.4. Specialized Focus Areas

Targeted examination of specific domains, such as digital services and online support systems, would serve emerging needs in contemporary higher education. Research on special service needs, including international students, students with disabilities, and financially disadvantaged students, would foster inclusivity in developing supportive services. Research on the impact of emerging technologies on the delivery of student affairs services might help curb innovative service development.

6.3.5. Policy and Implementation Research

Evaluative research on the processes involved with specific service improvement initiatives would contribute to effective change management guidance. An investigation into the different models of service delivery and their cost-effectiveness could provide valuable information for resource management decisions. Policy analysis evaluating the impact of CHED-issued guidelines and policies on the quality of services rendered would provide critical evidence-based policy recommendations.

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