**Research Article**

# Communication of Private University Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic

**Tresna Wiwitan, Neni Yulianita, Sophia Novita***

Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia

**ORCID**
Tresna Wiwitan: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6562-0505
Neni Yulianita: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3127-6344
Sophia Novita: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5027-8076

**Abstract.**
The purpose of this study was to examine and analyze the communication of private university services during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research study was motivated by the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in Indonesia and had a direct impact on various people's lives, including the world of education in universities. The online learning process in the form of distance lectures is an alternative and a must in conducting lectures for students. Various problems arise when universities must carry out all activities online so that communication services at universities during the Covid-19 pandemic are important, where students do not meet directly with lecturers and education staff.

The research method used in this study was qualitative with a case study approach at universities that are partners of Universitas Islam Bandung at the Region IV Higher Education Service Institute, West Java, and Banten. The selection of research objects was carried out purposively and subjectively based on the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education, namely Universitas Sangga Buana, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi Bandung, and Sekolah Tinggi Administrasi Sebelas April Sumedang. Data collection techniques are in-depth interviews with informants involved in service communication at selected private universities, observation, and literature study. The results showed that the communication of services carried out by private universities with students used e-learning, Zoom, Google meet, and Whatsapp groups. Barriers to online service communication occur when the internet network does not support it and many students go offline and do not comply with the health protocol.

**Keywords:** service communication, relationship management, covid-19 pandemic

Corresponding Author: Sophia Novita; email: tresnawiwitan@unisba.ac.id

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## 1. Introduction

Previous researchers have researched the influence of service quality, the influence of service quality, understanding of operational procedures, and supporting facilities on student satisfaction, the results of the study concluded that service quality, understanding of operational procedures systems, and supporting facilities partially and simultaneously affect student satisfaction at Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, [1]. However, previous research was limited to the level of service impact on student satisfaction. There has been no more in-depth research on the form of service communication provided. Therefore, there is a need for in-depth research on forms of service communication at universities, especially in the conditions of the covid pandemic.

Communication In service activities, service quality depends on the elements of public service communication. The element of communication plays a very important role in improving the quality of public services. Therefore, the communication factor needs to be a serious concern for public service organizations . [2]. The success of the implementation of higher education is determined by the involvement of the entire academic community, namely lecturers, educators, students, alumni, and stakeholders. In a previous study by Marfuah [3], it was explained that the involvement of lecturers and teaching staff in supporting the success of higher education was determined, among other things, by service. One of the services provided includes academic services, library services, and financial services. To provide this service, it is necessary to have service communication that is integrated with various service systems in universities.

The Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in Indonesia had a direct impact on various people's lives, including the world of education in universities. The online learning process in the form of distance lectures is an alternative and a must in conducting lectures for students. This is a challenge for education managers in universities and study programs with their respective limitations. But when changes in the field of education shift to online learning. System changes trigger academic stress in students which will have an impact on their learning achievement, ([4] in this case, communication is the keyword so it does not have a further impact.

Communication of services in universities during the Covid-19 pandemic is important, where students do not meet directly with lecturers and education staff. E-learning is one form of service communication activity provided by lecturers and educators to students. Service communication according to [5] is a communication practice in supporting the implementation of providing the best service for customers/customers of an organization to create a harmonious relationship of mutual understanding.

In 2020-2021 the research team conducted research on Service Communication for Universitas Islam Bandung Student Satisfaction, seen from the indicators of people, procedure, and technology. The results of the study indicate that there is an influence between service communication carried out by lecturers and educators on student satisfaction [6]. Based on the results of the research, the research team will conduct further research on the Communication of Private University Services during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The research was conducted using case studies of Universitas Islam Bandung-assisted Private Universities that were purposively selected as representatives of Private Universities accredited B and C. Universitas Islam Bandung as one of the Private Universities accredited A should foster Private Universities located in the LLDIKTI area IV West Java and Banten, currently, there are 32 Private Universities under the guidance of Universitas Islam Bandung. Universitas Islam Bandung has the task of fostering 32 Private Universities to increase the number of accreditation.

This research aims to examine and analyze the communication of Private University services during the Covid-19 pandemic based on aspects of people, procedure, and technology. The urgency of conducting research is to see a description of the Communication of Private University Services in West Java during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research is expected to produce a service communication model that can be used by private universities to provide the best service (excellent service) to students and stakeholders. Good and excellent service is one of the areas that students need to understand their university. Because of the excellent service, students and other customers feel comfortable enjoying education at the college [7]

One of the things that must be considered by any organization or business entity is a service improvement that will impact the business improvement work. With effective communication, the company can maintain good relations and harmony with consumers [8]. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is essential for business success. It has proven to be one of the fastest-growing technological solutions due to the impact of its implementation on the return on investment[9]. The success of CRM is highly influenced by "information technology use", also "customer orientation", "organizational capability", and "customer knowledge management" are related to CRM success [10]. The concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) according to [5] is used in various research on service quality. Francis Buttle's customer relationship management is a core strategy in business that integrates internal processes and functions with all external networks to create and deliver value for target customers profitably. Francis Buttle in Saleh (2010) explains, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) can be studied from three levels, namely, Strategic CRM, is a 'top-down view of CRM as the most important business

strategy that puts customers first and aims to attract and retain profitable customers, Operational CRM, is a view of CRM that focuses on automation projects such as service automation, Analytical CRM, is a bottom-up view of CRM that focuses on extracting customer data for strategic and tactical purposes, Strategic CRM focuses on developing a customer-oriented business culture. This culture is intended to win hearts and maintain customer loyalty.

## 2. Methodology

This study uses the post-positivistic paradigm as a point of view in reviewing and analyzing Service Communications during the Covid-19 Pandemic Era in Private Universities. The research process will be carried out through observation, asking questions to informants, collecting various specific data, analyzing data inductively from the specific to the general, and interpreting the meaning of the data regarding service communication.

Based on the phenomena in the field, this research is more appropriate to use a case study approach regarding Service Communication. This study is included in a multi-case design because the unit of analysis is more than one, namely Service Communication at three private universities under the auspices of the Islamic University of Bandung under the auspices of the Higher Education Service Institute Region IV West Java and Banten. The data analysis technique used in the qualitative analysis consists of four stages, namely. data collection, reduction, data presentation, and the last stage is drawing conclusions and checking.

The subjects of this research are people who are involved in Service Communication at Universitas Sangga Buana, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi Bandung, and Sekolah Tinggi Administrasi Sebelas April Sumedang. Intake of resource persons using purposive sampling technique, namely sampling based on the researcher's choice of what and whom aspects are used as a focus in certain situations and throughout the research.

## 3. Results And Discussion

Based on research findings from the process, people, and technology (CRM) aspects, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi and Unsap have not used e-learning for lectures, while Universitas Sangga Buana has used e-lectures from 2018 and is connected to the university's management information system. During the pandemic, the service of educators to students at Unsap was carried out offline, while at Stikom and Universitas Sangga Buana it was done online. Lectures at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi and Sekolah

Tinggi Administrasi Sebelas April Sumedang are conducted through the zoom platform, google meet, and WhatsApp group, while in Universitas Sangga Buana using e-learning. Even though during the third pandemic, Private Higher University still provided the best service for students following existing facilities and infrastructure.

There are 3 (three) important aspects that need to be considered in the CRM implementation process in service communication, namely:

1. Aspects of Human Resources (HR). In this aspect that must be considered is the change in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of human resources regarding services to students. Starting with providing an understanding of the ethos of 'providing excellent service' to lecturers and staff about the importance of providing the best service for students. In addition, the Private Higher University, management continues to provide excellent service training and assistance to all lecturers and staff to be better prepared for the CRM implementation process.

2. As aspects of the process, this aspect Private Higher Universities must define services to students in detail. It is intended that lecturers and staff who are in direct contact with customers have standard service communication rules and standards so that the service communication process becomes a system that is run by lecturers and staff.

3. Technology aspect, on the technology aspect Private Higher Universities, can choose the technology/online lecture system that is on the Private University budget and financial condition. Several things can be considered in choosing technology and online lecture systems, namely; budgetary capabilities, HR capabilities, and future CRM development.

The impact of applying the concept of Customer Relationship Management in Higher Education, including students, educators, and lecturers:

1. Student. Students gain access to information and have access to information from universities with various services available via the internet with various media owned, such as e-learning and WhatsApp. Technological resources are an integral part of the student learning process during a pandemic.

2. Educators and lecturers. CRM can provide added value to educators and lecturers in providing services to students. In this system, administrative and academic services are one unified service so that there is no difference or inequality between the two. The relationship between lecturers, educators, and students is closely

related to dynamic services based on the resources and strategies owned by the institution to improve student lectures. Discussions with students do not only happen on campus, but can be done anywhere, through e-learning, zoom, google meet, or Whatsapp groups.

This theory focuses on discussing the relationship management process between an organization and its public, internally and externally [11]. Relationships are represented by patterns of interaction, transactions, exchanges, and connectedness between organizations and their public. Communication is placed as a tool for building relationships, and programs are evaluated based on their impact on the relationship between institutions and the public. This theory explains the efforts of organizations to build relationships with their public create positive relationships in two directions. In the context of service communication at a Private University, it aims to build good relations with students.

The e-learning, zoom, google meet, and WhatsApp Group platforms used in service communication allow for a process of interaction, transaction, exchange, and openness between students and universities. According to Ledingham[11] togetherness in understanding and achieving benefits between organizations and the public can create long-term relationships, positive public perceptions, public support, and loyalty to products or services. A successful relationship is based on efforts to gain benefits for both parties, institutions, and the public. In the process of relations in service communication, there is an exchange of different perceptions, attributes, and identities, and between institutions and the public, it is possible to influence each other. But this exchange process is still balanced by the spirit of empathy, understanding, and trying to be mutually beneficial.

The service communication standards carried out by Private University are aimed at building and managing relationships with students and stakeholders. Various complaints and obstacles that occur in service communication are resolved within a maximum of 1 x 24 hours with service communication standards at Private University. From the Islamic perspective, service communication must prioritize the Qaulan Layyinan principle, according to [11] this principle emphasizes persuasive solutions with gentle words. Not provocative, does not bring down the dignity of others so that it can touch the heart: "Then talk to both of you with Qaulan Layyinan - gentle words ..." Surah Thaha: 2. In the context of service communication in universities, communication activities must be delivered gently, if there are problems, they must be resolved in a persuasive-solutional manner, not bringing down the dignity of others and touching the hearts of the public. Speaking gently, and politely, and being friendly to fellow human beings are part of the implementation of akhlaqul karimah.

## 4. Conclusion

Communication of Private University services during a pandemic is based on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) model. In the aspect of human resources, it is necessary to pay attention to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of lecturers and teaching staff in providing services to students. For the process aspect, private universities must define services to students in detail and have standard service communication rules and standards. In terms of technology, private universities must consider the selection of technology and online lecture systems according to budgetary capabilities, HR capabilities, and future CRM development**.**

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