



Research Article

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The Role of Academic Accreditation in Improving the Quality of Services and Student Activities in Academic Programmes at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University: Case Study

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Abstract

Academic accreditation is one of the most important priorities for higher education institutions. Therefore, universities seek to intensify efforts for funding from external parties to ensure the quality of their institutions and programmes. This study aimed to determine the quality of student services and activities in Prince Sattam University's accredited and unaccredited programmes from the students' perspective. It also looks at how different the answers of the study sample members are regarding the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of student services and activities based on the study variable for accredited and unaccredited academic programmes. The descriptive survey method and a questionnaire tool were used on a study sample of 804 students from various disciplines in colleges based on the status of accreditation of their programmes. The results showed that students are satisfied with the quality of student services and activities in academic programmes. Moreover, there are differences in the averages of students' responses based on the programme's status (accredited/unaccredited), favouring accredited programmes. This study recommends that academic accreditation be used to improve the quality assurance of student services and activities in academic programmes to increase student satisfaction, support the continuity of their education, and improve their learning outcomes.

Keywords: programmatic academic accreditation, student services, performance improvement, quality assurance (QA)

1. Introduction

Higher education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to improve its operations, ameliorate its outputs, and develop its services, along with the quantitative and qualitative expansion of its institutions, following increasing social demand and changing labour market needs. Thus, universities have focused on providing adequate support and implementing systems that increase efficiency and productivity in higher education. Academic accreditation is one of the university procedures for achieving internal quality assurance through compliance with specified standards as well as recognition and external quality assurance from well-known accrediting bodies. Institutional and programmatic academic accreditation requires various protocols in accordance with certain procedures to achieve accreditation, which is considered a quality seal. This accreditation ensures that the institution or programme has undergone a strict external peer review process based on predefined standards and is in line with the minimum requirements (Kumar et al., 2020).

Universities grant equal significance to student activities and services alongside academic matters, as they have developed a range of student activities to complement and develop the various aspects of the educational process. In this regard, the quality of service is a tool used to create a competitive advantage that may help higher education institutions deal with the rapid and dynamic shifts in the surrounding environment (Kassim et al., 2013). In fact, the issue of quality in universities has been prioritised in all facets of the educational process. Hence, universities seek to provide services that students require, which necessitates studying the nature of those services and activities and cooperating to develop their performance and achieve their objectives (Al-Bawqari, 2015). According to Abdullah and Hassan (2019), the quality of student services reflects an attractive university environment, which enhances the students' satisfaction with the university and motivates them to do more work. This would eventually improve the academic level of students and contribute to graduating students with outstanding performance, ensuring students' loyalty to their university and establishing the university's reputation among higher education institutions. According to Al-Awlaki (2018), there is a direct relationship between the application of the dimensions of quality assurance and academic accreditation at the university and the improvement of students' satisfaction. Al-Qurashi and Al-Mujahid (2017) indicate that the criteria for ensuring quality and academic accreditation contribute to positive changes in the quality of educational services. In this regard, Saif and Al-Aqraa (2014) emphasise that the process of assessing the quality of student services should be continuous and periodic, rather than an exceptional process that takes place once or during long, spaced, and irregular periods.

Elsayed (2019) demonstrates that the competitive nature of universities requires paying attention to evaluating universities' diverse activities and services by surveying students' views and their level of satisfaction with them. Because the quality of student activities and services is one of the criteria and pillars of academic accreditation, this study will examine the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of student services and student activities in university programmes from the perspective of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University students.

Quality and academic accreditation in universities have become a necessity and an urgent requirement in educational policies, as universities believe in the added value of their application, which lies in improving the performance of institutions and their programmes and increasing their efficiency. In addition, Article 41 of the new Saudi university system mandates that universities obtain institutional and programme accreditation from the Education and Training Evaluation Commission or other recognised accrediting bodies (Ministry of Education, 2020). From this standpoint, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University has prioritised quality and obtaining institutional academic accreditation since its inception, which it did in 2019, with a number of its programmes striving to obtain national and international programme accreditations (Deanship of Development and Quality, 2022). All accrediting organisations use specific standards to ensure that institutions and programmes meet quality expectations and continuously improve over time. These standards address key areas such as faculty members, student support services, funding, facilities, curricula, and student

learning outcomes (CHEA, 2010). Student activities and services are among the centerpieces of accreditation standards, as they measure quality in terms of planning and application, integration and interdependency, and improvement and development.

Nayef and Al-Mutairi (2016) recommend the use of total quality in the management of student activities to improve their service and develop their performance. Meanwhile, Cvetko et al. (2016) emphasise the need to apply the Deming cycle (PDCA), which focuses on planning, implementation, verification, and improvement in student activities and services to achieve quality. Moreover, as mentioned in the first scientific conference of the College of Education, the difficulties of student activities are due to the lack of research and scientific studies on student activities, which may make it difficult to evaluate such activities and achieve their aspired quality (Issa et al., 2019).

Given the scarcity of studies on the role of academic accreditation in improving student services and activities, the limitation of this study lies in identifying the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of student services and activities in academic programmes at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. Previous studies related to the subject of the study, academic accreditation, quality of services, and student activities were reviewed. They are numerous:

Al-Eyadhy and Alenezi (2021) investigated how external quality assurance practices in the accreditation processes reflect on the other end of the learning pathway, including student satisfaction. A retrospective quantitative secondary data analysis with a before–after comparison research design was used to evaluate external accreditation's impact on students' average satisfaction level within two accreditation cycles in the King Saud University Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme. Results showed that both accreditation cycles recorded an increase in student satisfaction following accreditation.

Preparatory phase activities and mobility through self-study assessment, along with challenging programme competencies, are considered key drivers of accreditation-related quality improvement practices. Al-Qurashi and Al-Mujahid (2017) determined the level of application of quality assurance standards and academic accreditation at Dhamar University from the perspective of faculty members and its relationship with the quality level of educational service. The analytical-descriptive approach was used to achieve the study's objectives, with a questionnaire serving as the study tool. The results of the study show a medium level of application of the quality assurance and academic accreditation standards. There were no statistically significant differences in the respondents' answers to the level of application of quality assurance and academic accreditation standards by sex, academic degree, major, college, years of experience, or number of courses in the field of quality assurance and academic accreditation. Nevertheless, the results show statistically significant differences in the study sample's responses to the level of service quality by the variables of gender (favouring males), scientific majors, and the College of Engineering, and no differences by study system variable.

Al-Awlaki (2018) sought to determine the level of application of the quality assurance system and academic accreditation. This study also investigated the nature of the relationship between the use of quality assurance and academic accreditation at Ibb University and improving students' satisfaction with the educational service. Statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and multiple correlations. The results show that the quality assurance system and academic accreditation used at the university under study (the quality of faculty members, administrative system, educational programmes, educational facilities, and student care system) are lacking in positive aspects and are not meeting the needs and expectations of students. Students are also not happy with the educational service. The results also reveal a significant relationship between the application of a quality assurance system and academic accreditation at the university under study and the enhancement of students' satisfaction with the educational service.

Nguyen and Ta (2018) investigated the perspectives of higher education managers, staff, lecturers, and students on the impacts of accreditation on institutional quality management. The views were explored using a case study approach involving semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at a leading university in Vietnam. The results indicate that accreditation has an impact on the majority of the university's management aspects, including programmes, teaching activities,

lecturers, supporting staff, learners, and facilities, and that accreditation has a significant impact on improving the university's quality of teaching, learning, research, and management. The study makes recommendations for improving the use of accreditation results.

Al-Nayef and Al-Mutairi (2016) conducted a study aiming to contribute to the development of student activities at the University of Hail by introducing total quality management and its modern perspectives. The study took a descriptive approach, presenting a proposed vision for the development of student activities that includes the following elements: the objective of the proposed vision, the foundations and pillars of the proposed vision, the requirements of the proposed vision, the stages and procedures of the proposed vision, and some possible challenges to the proposed vision and how to deal with them. The study recommends activating student participation in the management and development of student activities and using teamwork to implement student activities.

Saif and Al-Aqraa (2014) examined the experiences of health administration faculties in applying service quality standards and the impact of those standards on student satisfaction. A questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed to 490 male and female students in four colleges, and the data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The results show that health administration faculties use service quality standards at medium levels and that the quality service standards used affect student satisfaction levels. This study provides a set of recommendations for colleges of health administration to improve the implementation of quality standards, ensuring continuous improvement and student satisfaction.

Al-Tijani (2015) also aims at assessing the quality of educational services at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Najran University, from the students' perspective. The study determines whether there is a difference in the students' perspectives about the level of quality of the college educational service based on variables such as faculty members, scientific material, physical facilities, administration, employees, student activities, and the college environment. According to the statistics of the college, the research community consisted of 2,751 male and female students. An intentional sample of 104 male and female students was selected based on academic level, gender, and major. Using the descriptive method, the data were collected through a precise questionnaire and statistically analysed, with the findings that the quality level of the educational service in the College of Administrative Sciences is medium and that there are statistically significant differences between students' responses about the quality level of the College of Administrative Sciences' educational service, which are attributed to the study variables.

Most of the previous studies are consistent with the subject of the present paper in terms of academic accreditation, quality of services, and student activities, including those by Al-Eyadhy and Alenezi (2021), Al-Awlaki (2018), and Al-Qurashi and Al-Mujahid (2017) on the subject of accreditation and quality of services, as well as those by Al-Tijani (2015) and Saif (2014) on service quality. The current study is also consistent with the study by Al-Nayef and Al-Mutairi (2016) on the subject of student activities. However, the current study goes further to examine the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of student services and activities within academic programmes at Prince Sattam University from the students' perspective. All the aforementioned studies were referred to in creating the theoretical framework, developing the study tools, and interpreting the results.

2. Terminology of the Study

Academic accreditation is the official or legal recognition of academic programmes or educational institutions. The purpose of accreditation is to ensure that higher education institutions provide acceptable levels of quality. Accreditation does not necessarily mean that all accredited institutions are identical or that all students attending those institutions achieve the same goals or outcomes. However, it does imply that creditors will ensure that students receive qualified instructors, an appropriate curriculum, and support services to enable them to achieve their personal, academic,

intellectual, and professional goals (Accreditation Reform, 2018).

Programmatic academic accreditation is defined by the Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS, 2019) as the study and analysis of the self-study report prepared by the programme by experts focusing on indicators relevant to the teaching and learning processes. It is according to the standards of the organisation that are consistent with the standards for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area to which it belongs and considers the individual goals set by the institution. Subsequently, it considers expert judgment to determine if the programme is able to achieve the set goals and standards.

The quality of student services is the extent to which the university's student services realise the desires, preferences, and needs of students by employing the available resources in a distinct and elaborate manner (Al-Farsi et al., 2020).

The quality of student activities can be defined procedurally as the efficient performance of planned technical, cultural, social, and sports tasks and assignments carried out by students, which, in turn, develops their talents and utilises their time for their benefit within the university.

2.1 Study questions

1. What is the state of the quality of student services and activities in accredited and unaccredited academic programmes at Prince Sattam University from the students' perspective?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between the responses of the participants of the study sample regarding the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of student services and activities by study variable (accredited-unaccredited)?

3. Method

According to Duneier (2019), the quantitative method was used in accordance with the descriptive survey design, which provides a description of the trends of a given society by studying a sample of the society, revealing the phenomenon, its size, and correlation, and generalising its results. The design was used to determine the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of services and student activities in Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University programmes.

3.1 Study population

Students from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University's accredited and unaccredited academic programmes comprise the study population. Students were drawn at random from colleges of various specialisations, with a total of 804 male and female students representing a research population distributed as in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of study items by programme and status

Status	Frequency	%
Accredited	404	50.2
Unaccredited	400	49.8
Total	804	100.0

Table 1 shows that more than half of the study participants are from accredited programmes, accounting for 50.2% of the total, while the remaining 49.8% are from unaccredited programmes. This indicates that there are roughly the same number of students participating in the study from accredited and unaccredited programmes.

3.2 Tool of the study

The questionnaire used to measure the quality of student services and activities in the Deanship of Development and Quality was used to achieve the study's objectives. The questionnaire consists of two parts.

Part 1 includes the primary data: programme and site.

Part 2 includes 7 dimensions with 22 statements, as follows:

- The first dimension: registration services (6 statements)
- The second dimension: student affairs services (3 statements)
- The third dimension: cultural services (2 statements)
- The fourth dimension: sports services (3 statements)
- The fifth dimension: security services (3 statements)
- The sixth dimension: nutrition services (3 statements)
- The seventh dimension: medical services (2 statements).

The responses to the statements were based on a five-point Likert-type scale (agree, strongly agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree).

3.3 Validity and consistency of the questionnaire

- a. Validity of the questionnaire: It was examined using factorial validity, showing that the statements of the questionnaire are compatible with their dimensions. The results show that the statements of each dimension are significant at the 0.05 level.
- b. Consistency of the questionnaire: It was examined using Cronbach's alpha measure, which revealed that the discrimination index for each statement is high (>0.18). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is found to be >0.70 , reaching 0.95, indicating that the questionnaire is consistent.

4. Results

4.1 Results of the first question

What is the status of academic accreditation in improving the quality of services and student activities in the programmes of the faculties of Prince Sattam University?

To answer the first question, the total mean of the participants' responses was determined by calculating the individual means of the dimensions included in the questionnaire. The overall results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall results of the assessment of the quality of student services and activities in accredited and unaccredited academic programmes at Prince Sattam University from the students' perspective ($n = 804$)

Questionnaire dimensions	Total		Degree of agreement
	Mean	SD	
D1: Registration services	3.57	0.94	Agree (high)
D2: Student affairs services	3.56	1.03	Agree (high)
D3: Cultural services	3.58	0.98	Agree (high)
D4: Sports services	3.31	1.14	Somewhat agree (medium)
D5: Security services	3.35	1.01	Agree (high)
D6: Nutrition services	3.05	1.11	Somewhat agree (medium)
D7: Medical services	3.48	1.10	Agree (high)
Overall assessment	3.41	0.87	Agree (high)

Table 2 shows that the overall arithmetic mean of the questionnaire is 3.41, with a standard deviation of 0.87. These values confirm that the quality of services and student activities at Prince Sattam University is high, as the mean falls in the fourth category of the five-scale categories, indicating that students agree with the quality of services and student activities in the academic programmes at Prince Sattam University, that is, with a high degree of agreement. Cultural services ranked first among dimensions, with a mean of 3.58, a standard deviation of 0.98, and a high degree of agreement (agree), followed by the dimension of registration services, with a mean of 3.75, a standard deviation of 0.94, and a high degree of agreement (agree). However, the dimension of nutrition services ranked last, with a mean of (3.05), a standard deviation of (0.11), and a medium degree of agreement (somewhat agree).

4.2 Results of the first dimension: Quality of registration services

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the responses to the quality of registration services (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	My results are announced on the university's website three days after the end of exams for all courses.	3.17	1.34	Somewhat agree (medium)	6
2	I was able to do the registration, deletion, and addition processes for the courses electronically.	3.64	1.20	Agree (high)	3
3	I had ample time for the process of registering for my courses.	3.51	1.20	Agree (high)	5
4	There are clear announcements and instructions at the university to help me complete course registration.	3.59	1.14	Agree (high)	4
5	I was offered help from the staff in student affairs to solve the problems that I encountered to complete the course registration.	3.66	1.14	Agree (high)	2
6	I was notified by the Deanship of Admission and Registration Affairs regarding the course registration dates, deletion, addition, and change according to the regular procedures.	3.87	1.06	Agree (high)	1
Total mean for the quality of registration services		3.57	0.94	Agree (high)	

Table 3 shows that the study respondents agree with the quality of registration services (3.57). The high degree of agreement may be due to the concentration of electronic registration services. The arithmetic means for these statements range from 3.17 to 3.87, and the degrees of agreement range from agree to strongly agree, that is, high and medium. Statement 6 ("I have been notified by the Deanship of Admission and Registration of the dates for course registration, deletion, addition, and change according to the regular procedures") recorded the highest arithmetic mean (3.87), whereas statement 1 ("My results are announced in the courses on the university's website three days after the end of the exams for all courses") recorded the lowest arithmetic mean (3.17).

4.3 Results of the second dimension: The quality of student affairs service

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the responses about the state of the quality of student affairs services (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	The student affairs officer receives students well.	3.68	1.10	Agree (high)	2
2	The student affairs officer answers all student inquiries as required.	3.69	1.08	Agree (high)	1

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
3	The student affairs officer presents booklets that help students familiarise themselves with the study system at the university.	3.32	1.22	Somewhat agree (medium)	3
Total mean for the quality of student affairs services		3.56	1.03	Agree (high)	

Table 4 shows that students agree with the quality of student affairs services, that is, to a high degree, as the total mean score is 3.65. This is because student affairs services are provided by the Deanship of Student Affairs at the university for various programmes and their students. The arithmetic means of the statements in this dimension range from 3.32 to 3.69, and the degrees of agreement range between high and medium. The arithmetic mean for statement 2 (“The student affairs employee answers all students’ inquiries as required”) is 3.69, while statement 3 (“The student affairs officer provides booklets that help students familiarise themselves with the study system at the university”) scored the lowest arithmetic mean (3.32).

4.4 Results of the third dimension: The quality of cultural services

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the responses about the state of the quality of cultural services (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	The university provides students with the opportunity to participate in cultural activities.	3.75	1.03	Agree (high)	1
2	Rewards for cultural activities are adequate.	3.42	1.11	Agree high)	2
Total mean for the quality of cultural services		3.58	0.98	Agree (high)	

Table 5 shows that respondents agree with the quality of cultural services, that is, with a high degree of agreement (3.58). This means that students see that the university and its programmes provide them with the opportunity to participate in cultural activities and that the incentives offered are commensurate with the nature of the activities. The arithmetic means for the statements in this dimension range from 3.42 to 3.75, making the degree of agreement high. Statement 1 (“The university provides students with the opportunity to participate in cultural activities”) scored the highest arithmetic mean (3.75), while statement 2 (“Rewards for cultural activities are adequate”) scored the lowest arithmetic mean (3.42).

4.5 Results of the fourth dimension: The quality of sports services

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the responses about the state of the quality of sports services (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	The university allows students to participate in sports activities.	3.39	1.21	Agree (high)	1
2	Sports activities are diverse.	3.27	1.24	Somewhat agree (medium)	2
3	Prizes for sports activities are adequate.	3.26	1.18	Somewhat agree (medium)	3
Total mean for the quality of sport services		3.31	1.14	Somewhat agree (medium)	

Table 6 shows that students somewhat agree with the quality of sports services, that is, a medium degree of agreement (3.31). The arithmetic means for the statements of this dimension range from

3.26 to 3.39, as statement 1 (“The university provides students with the opportunity to participate in sports activities”) scored the highest arithmetic mean (3.39), and statement 3 (“Prizes for sports activities are adequate”) scored the lowest arithmetic mean (3.26).

4.6 Results of the fifth dimension: The quality of security services

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of the responses to the state of the quality of security services (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	Parking space is commensurate with the number of students.	2.94	1.37	Somewhat agree (medium)	3
2	The security services provided to students at the university are efficient.	3.59	1.08	Agree (high)	1
3	The application forms for obtaining security services are simple and easy to fill out.	3.52	1.07	Agree (high)	2
Total mean for the quality of security services		3.35	1.01	Agree (high)	

Table 7 shows that students agree on the quality of security services, that is, a high degree of agreement (3.35). The arithmetic means for the statements in this dimension ranged from 2.94 to 3.59, indicating high and medium agreement. Statement 2 (“The security services provided to students at the university are efficient”) scored the highest arithmetic mean (3.59), while statement 1 (“Parking capacity is commensurate with the number of students”) scored the lowest arithmetic mean (2.94).

4.7 Results of the sixth dimension: Quality of nutrition service

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of the responses to the state of the quality of the nutrition service (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	Nutrition services meet the needs of students.	2.87	1.38	Somewhat agree (medium)	3
2	The nutrition services site is suitable for students.	3.13	1.33	Somewhat agree (medium)	2
3	Prices for nutrition services are appropriate.	2.65	1.39	Somewhat agree (medium)	4
4	Nutrition services are clean.	3.55	1.14	Agree (high)	1
Total mean for the quality of nutrition services		3.05	1.11	Somewhat agree (medium)	

Table 8 shows that students somewhat agree on the quality of nutrition service, that is, medium approval (3.05). The arithmetic means for the statements in this dimension range from 2.65 to 3.55, that is, between high and medium degrees of agreement, with statement 4 (“Nutrition services are clean”) having the highest arithmetic mean (3.55) and statement 3 (“Prices for nutrition services are appropriate”) having the lowest arithmetic mean (2.65).

4.8 Results of the seventh dimension: The quality of medical services

Table 9. Descriptive statistics of the responses to the state of the quality of medical services (n = 804)

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
1	The university has a medical clinic to provide health services to students.	3.51	1.18	Agree (high)	1

No.	Statements	Arithmetic mean	SD	Degree of agreement	Order
2	The performance of the medical clinic staff is efficient in providing health care to students.	3.45	1.12	Agree (high)	2
Total mean for the quality of medical services		3.48	1.10	Agree (high)	

Table 9 shows that students agree on the quality of medical services, with a high degree of agreement (3.48). The arithmetic means of the statements in this dimension range from 3.45 to 3.51, as statement 1 (“The university has a medical clinic to provide health services to students”) scored the highest arithmetic mean (3.51) and statement 2 (“The performance of medical clinic workers is efficient in providing health care to students”) scored the lowest arithmetic mean (3.45).

4.9 Results of the second question

The previous descriptive results related to each of the services provided to students show that there are differences and variations in the arithmetic means of the student responses to accredited and unaccredited programmes. Therefore, it is necessary to study the significance of these differences and variations based on the status of the programme (accredited/unaccredited) and, in turn, answer the second study question: Are there any differences between the study participants’ responses regarding the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of programmes, student activities, and services based on the variable of the study (accredited/unaccredited)? To answer the question, Levene’s test of homogeneity was used to identify the differences between the respondents’ perspectives based on the status of the programme (accredited/unaccredited).

Table 10. Results of the assessment of the quality of student services and activities in accredited and unaccredited academic programmes at Prince Sattam University from the students’ perspective ($n = 804$)

Questionnaire dimensions	Accredited		Unaccredited	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
D1: Registration services	3.64	0.92	3.50	0.96
D2: Student affairs services	3.64	0.98	3.49	1.08
D3: Cultural services	3.72	0.94	3.44	0.99
D4: Sports services	3.46	1.06	3.15	1.19
D5: Security services	3.43	0.97	3.28	1.04
D6: Nutrition services	3.13	1.11	2.97	1.11
D7: Medical services	3.45	1.10	3.51	1.10
Overall assessment	3.49	0.84	3.33	0.88

Table 10 shows a comparison of the quality of student services and activities between accredited and unaccredited programmes. Notably, there is a difference between the mean values, as all the mean values for the dimensions are higher in the accredited programmes (3.49) than in the unaccredited programmes (3.33).

Cultural services in the accredited programmes reached the highest mean level (3.72), with a standard deviation of 0.94, while the same dimension in the unaccredited programmes reached 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.99. This may be due to the increasing focus of programmatic academic accreditation standards on the cultural services of students by providing data and guidance for them, as well as evaluating and improving the services.

Nutrition services recorded the lowest mean among services, with a mean of 3.13 and a standard deviation of 1.11 in accredited programmes, while the same in unaccredited programmes recorded a mean of 2.97 and a standard deviation of 1.11. This may be because cafeterias are usually built through competitive bidding and foreign private operating companies contracted by the university. Therefore,

students may consider the quality of the nutrition services to be medium in comparison to the lower quality in unaccredited programmes, which may be due to a lack of follow-up compared to accredited ones.

It is clear from Table 10 that there are differences between the means of the responses. To identify the significance of these differences between the students' responses by the status of the programme (accredited/unaccredited), it is necessary to compare the means of responses at the 5% significance level. The following table shows the results of the analysis of these differences.

Table 11. Results of the *t* test and Levene's test on the significance of the differences between students' responses by the programme status variable (accredited/unaccredited) (*n*= 804)

Study dimensions	Programme status	Sample volume	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	T-value	Degrees of freedom	Probability value	Statistical significance
M1: Registration services	Accredited	404	3.6407	0.9151	2.08	802	0.038	Yes
	Unaccredited	400	3.5029	0.96228				
M2: Student affairs services	Accredited	404	3.6378	0.98401	2.056	802	0.04	Yes
	Unaccredited	400	3.4883	1.07573				
M3: Cultural services	Accredited	404	3.7166	0.94488	4.01	802	0	Yes
	Unaccredited	400	3.4425	0.99268				
M4: Sports services	Accredited	404	3.4612	1.05743	3.896	802	0	Yes
	Unaccredited		3.1517	1.1921				
M5: Security services	Accredited	404	3.429	0.97313	2.156	802	0.031	Yes
	Unaccredited	400	3.2758	1.04068				
M6: Nutrition services	Accredited	404	3.1306	1.11211	2.061	802	0.04	Yes
	Unaccredited	400	2.9694	1.10557				
M7: Medical services	Accredited	404	3.4505	1.09591	-	802	0.432	No
	Unaccredited	400	3.5113	1.09762				
General appreciation	Accredited	404	3.4906	0.84009	2.669	802	0.008	Yes
	Unaccredited	400	3.3283	0.88474				

Table 11 indicates the following results of the *t* test and the Levene's test for homogeneity.

- There are statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.00) between the quality of services and student activities in favour of the accredited programmes as a total score. This indicates that accreditation has a role in improving the quality of student services and activities.
- The programme status variable does not reveal statistically significant differences with regard to the seventh dimension (medical services). The Sig value (*P* value) exceeded the value of the significance level of 5%, which indicates that the means of students' responses in accredited and unaccredited programmes are equal in relation to this dimension; that is, the difference is not significant. This indicates the compatibility of students' responses in both cases toward student services, as they are provided according to a central, unified system in all university programmes.
- The programme case variable reveals statistically significant differences in relation to the rest of the dimensions (registration, cultural, sports, nutrition, and security services), where the *P* value in each of them is less than the value of the significance level of 5%. This indicates that the accredited programmes have a statistically significant advantage in all of these dimensions. This may be attributed to the role of programmatic accreditation in developing these services and striving to develop and improve their quality.

5. Discussion

The study shows that academic accreditation has a role in improving the quality of services and various student activities in university programmes. The study results confirm that the quality of student services and activities differs depending on the status of the programme (accredited or unaccredited). The answer to the first question shows that the quality of services and student activities in the specific programmes of Prince Sattam University is high, as the quality of services has medium values in accredited programmes, which are higher than in unaccredited programmes.

Cultural services were the best among all services, while nutrition services were the worst. This is inconsistent with Saif (2014) and Al-Tijani (2015), who found that the quality of services provided was medium from the perspective of students. This may be due to the novelty of this study and the difference in the environment, as well as the improvement of student services and activities due to the university obtaining institutional accreditation in general and programmatic accreditation in particular from local and international bodies in some programmes.

Regarding the second question, it became clear that the efforts of the special accredited programmes made a statistically significant difference in the quality of programmes and student activities in the following subservices: cultural, registration, nutrition, security, sports, and student affairs. There are no differences in the dimension of medical services, which may be because the management of these services follows the institutional system of the university as a whole in the services that have obtained institutional accreditation. This is consistent with the study by Al-Eyadhy and Alenezi (2021), which suggests that accreditation is related to student satisfaction. Furthermore, it agrees with the study by Al-Awlaki (2018) that there is a significant relationship between the implementation of the quality assurance system and academic accreditation in the university under study and the promotion of students' satisfaction with the educational service. Finally, the findings are in line with Nguyen and Ta (2018), indicating that the effect of accreditation significantly contributes to enhancing the quality of the university in various aspects, including students.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings indicated that the quality of student services and activities at Prince Sattam University is high, despite differences in the degree of agreement among services. The degree is high in cultural services, registration, student affairs, security, and health; meanwhile, it is medium in nutrition and sports. The results also show statistically significant differences in the respondents' responses to the quality of services and academic activities in Prince Sattam University's programmes based on the study variable (accredited/unaccredited) in favour of accredited programmes.

The study presents a number of recommendations:

- Stimulate academic programmes to obtain academic accreditation to ensure the internal quality of their services and activities.
- Programmes should periodically evaluate the services and activities provided and work on developing and improving them.
- Expand the opening of partnerships and competitions in providing nutrition, sports, and health services to students.
- Take into account the students' opinions, suggestions, and perspectives to improve student services and activities.

This study focuses on a local university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the assumption that this university would be a good example of representing the quality of student services and activities in academic programmes from the students' perspective. Therefore, this study may be applicable to any other university. Moreover, this study may fill the current gaps in the role of academic accreditation in improving the quality of student services and activities.

There are some limitations to this study. First, the study collects data on the quality of student services and activities using a questionnaire. Although the questionnaire is an effective tool, future

studies could combine it with in-depth interviews to provide broader knowledge and clearer dimensions of this topic. This study was limited to Prince Sattam University but could be applied to other universities and used to compare students' perspectives on the quality of services and student activities at various universities.

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