

## Gap Analysis of The Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka Policy In Islamic State Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

**Ali Alatas<sup>1\*</sup>, Sahid Susanto<sup>1</sup>, Zuprizal<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Master of Higher Education Management Study Program, Graduate School, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

***Email: [alialatas6797@mail.ugm.ac.id](mailto:alialatas6797@mail.ugm.ac.id)***

**Abstract:** Higher education institutions play a strategic role as centers of academic excellence and are expected to ensure the delivery of quality education. One of the key national efforts toward this goal is the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy. This study examined the level of student satisfaction, the service quality gap between expectations and perceived reality, and institutional readiness in implementing MBKM at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, one of Indonesia's State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Using a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 97 students across 12 faculties and 38 study programs, and through in-depth interviews with institutional policymakers. The study revealed the overall quality of MBKM service delivery remains below expectations, with an average satisfaction score of 2.92 on a five-point Likert scale and an overall gap score of -1.42 (expectation = 4.34; perception = 2.92). The analysis across the SERVQUAL dimensions reveals that Tangibles (-1.53) represent the most critical gap, followed by Responsiveness (-1.49), Reliability (-1.38), Assurance (-1.37), and Empathy (-1.35), indicating deficiencies in infrastructure, responsiveness, and policy support. The findings highlight a commitment-capacity paradox, where institutional willingness to implement MBKM is not supported by sufficient systemic readiness, particularly in terms of infrastructure, governance, and coordination mechanisms. At the policy level, the study underscores that MBKM implementation under the Ministry of Religious Affairs remains administratively adaptive but epistemologically fragmented, lacking contextual alignment with the distinctive mission of Islamic higher education. To optimize MBKM implementation and prevent students from becoming victims of systemic unpreparedness, the study recommends a critical restructuring of MBKM governance within the Ministry of Religious Affairs focusing on transparency, inter-institutional collaboration,

data-driven evaluation, and active student representation in policy formulation. Strengthening institutional readiness through leadership development, digital infrastructure, and integrative curriculum design will be essential to ensure that MBKM functions as a transformative, value-based educational ecosystem, producing graduates who are intellectually autonomous, ethically grounded, and socially responsible in embodying the principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

**Keywords:** *Service Quality, Gap Analysis, Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta*

## INTRODUCTION

VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) is a term originating from the military, aptly describing the current condition of higher education, which faces various uncertainties (Waller et al., 2019). As institutions with strategic roles as centers of academic excellence, universities are expected not only to perform administrative functions but also to address societal challenges by producing competent human resources (Mahel, 2021; Handayani, 2020; Sano & Tomoda, 2010).

Indonesia faces significant disparities in higher education quality and institutional capacity. The country has 4,523 higher education institutions and 31,399 study programs (PDDIKTI, 2025), necessitating strategic and well-implemented policies to ensure graduate competencies align with societal needs. To address this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced the MBKM policy, comprising eight learning programs designed to enhance student competence and relevance to current challenges (Kusumawardani et al., 2024; Mulyati, 2022).

In parallel, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama), which oversees Islamic higher education, manages 964 institutions, 59 of which are State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) categorized as UIN, IAIN, and STAIN (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The MoRA established guidelines for MBKM implementation through the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 7290 of 2020 (Ministry of Religion, 2020).

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta responded positively to this policy, formalizing its implementation through Rector Decree No. 503 of 2020 on Curriculum Development Guidelines (Rector Decree No. 503, 2020). As a university with the vision "To Become a Globally Reputable University Integrating Islamic Knowledge, Indonesianness, and Science" (KEPPRES, 2002), UIN Jakarta must align its curriculum and institutional strategy to integrate Islamic scholarship with modern sciences.

Each institution interprets and implements MBKM differently based on

its background, characteristics, and student demographics (Puspitasari & Nugroho, 2021; Nofia, 2020). Curriculum design must foster knowledge depth, practical skills, and adaptive mindsets (Abualrub et al., 2013). Effective educational systems directly influence national competence and quality (Cunningham et al., 2021). Therefore, institutions must align activities with both institutional goals and student needs, ensuring readiness from conceptual understanding to service implementation to achieve student satisfaction (Sulistyawati, 2015).

At UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, MBKM implementation requires adaptation and contextualization to ensure inclusivity across diverse fields of Islamic and social sciences, such as *tasawuf*, *tafsir-hadith*, and *dirasat islamiyah*. This poses a unique challenge in aligning MBKM objectives with institutional realities while maintaining service quality that supports students' academic and non-academic needs. Consequently, this study aimed to examine policy implementation at State Islamic Religious Universities, particularly UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, to assess student satisfaction, identify implementation gaps, evaluate institutional alignment with MBKM, and to determine policy readiness.

## **METHOD**

The research approach employed was a mixed-methods by combines quantitative and qualitative research through a sequential explanatory design (Toyon, 2021). The mixed-methods were used as a way to obtain comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective information and databases about events and events (Nur et al., 2024). The quantitative validity testing was conducted on 30 respondents using the Pearson Product-Moment method, while quantitative reliability testing was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha > 0.60 with IBM SPSS version 25 application. Meanwhile, the qualitative validity testing was based on trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility, while qualitative reliability was ensured through re-examination with the assistance of expert judgment.

The population in this study consists of the entire academic community of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, with quantitative sampling using the Lameshow formula (Surjanovic et al., 2024). While for qualitative research using non-probability sampling (Stratton, 2023), a purposive sampling approach was used to facilitate the selection of respondents based on the compatibility of required characteristics (Andrade, 2021). The quantitative sample in this study consisted of 97 respondents, characterized as students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> semesters who participated in the MBKM program.

Meanwhile, the qualitative sample comprised 4 respondents, including policymakers at the university, faculty, and study program levels.

The quantitative approach in this study was conducted by designing a structured questionnaire consisting of statements based on service quality variables, operationalized through the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). This model conceptualizes service quality as the discrepancy between expected and perceived service, providing a robust theoretical foundation for assessing the effectiveness of MBKM implementation in higher education. Measurements were carried out using a 5-point Likert scale (Batterton & Hale, 2017), ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to evaluate both the level of student satisfaction and the gap between expectations and perceived reality of the MBKM services provided. Following service satisfaction theory, the gap score for each item was calculated as:

$$\text{Gap Score} = \text{Perceived Service (P)} - \text{Expected Service (E)} \quad (1)$$

A positive gap (+) indicates that the perceived reality exceeds expectations, representing a strength in service delivery. A negative gap (-) indicates that student expectations surpass perceived service, revealing areas requiring improvement. The magnitude of the gap provides further insight: larger differences suggest that students perceive the services as far from their expectations, whereas smaller differences indicate closer alignment between service provision and expectations. By aggregating these gap scores across the five SERVQUAL dimensions, this study provides a systematic and dimension-level analysis of MBKM service quality, allowing for the identification of specific areas for improvement. This quantitative assessment is further reinforced by the readiness framework, which examines the institution's capacity to meet stakeholder expectations (Al-Harthi & Karp, 2019).

The integration of SERVQUAL and the readiness framework provides a theoretically grounded approach to evaluate both the perceived quality of services and the organization's preparedness to implement MBKM programs effectively. The qualitative approach was conducted through in-depth interviews with various relevant stakeholders, literature studies, and documentation related to MBKM policy implementation at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. This qualitative data allowed for contextual exploration, providing insights into operational challenges, policy interpretation, and organizational practices that influence student satisfaction.

By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, a methodological triangulation approach, the study achieves both descriptive and explanatory depth, addressing unresolved issues and producing research that is oriented toward practical problem-solving. By explicitly linking SERVQUAL, service satisfaction theory, and readiness framework, this study establishes a comprehensive theoretical and methodological foundation, ensuring that both the measurement and interpretation of MBKM service quality are grounded in established theory. This integration allows for evidence-based recommendations for policy refinement and service improvement, providing value for both academic and practical contexts.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 101 respondents, consisting of 97 quantitative respondents who were students participating in the MBKM policy across 13 faculties. While the other 4 respondents were policymakers at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta who intersect with related policies. The questionnaire was distributed between November and December 2024, a questionnaire with 20 statements using Google Forms and shared via various digital social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Email, as well as through direct meetings. After distributing the questionnaire, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews one by one, collecting literature studies and related documentation. The respondents in this study included 12 faculties, 3 scientific clusters, and 38 study programs. Additionally, the 4 qualitative respondents were relevant policymakers, selected using a qualitative approach.

### Respondent Characteristics

The quantitative approach was carried out by distributing items containing statements based on service quality variables. The characteristics of the respondents in this study can be described as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	39	40.2
Female	58	59.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that there are 39 male respondents with a percentage of 40.2% and 58 female respondents with a percentage of 59.8%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the dominant gender in this study

is female. Furthermore, the characteristics of respondents based on the semester are as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents by semester

Semester	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> semester	16	16.5
5 <sup>th</sup> semester	40	41.3
7 <sup>th</sup> semester	41	42.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on the semester, the researcher found 16 respondents currently in their 3<sup>rd</sup> semester with a percentage of 16.5%, 40 respondents or 41.3% were in their 5<sup>th</sup> semester, and 41 respondents or 42.2% were in their 7<sup>th</sup> semester. The distribution of respondents in this study was dominated by respondents from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semesters. In addition, the following is a table of respondent characteristics based on faculty:

Table 3. Respondents by faculty

Faculty	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Faculty of Ushuluddin	8	8.2
Faculty of Dirasah and Islamiyah	6	6.2
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching	9	9.3
Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences	25	25.8
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	3	3.1
Faculty of Syariah and Law	7	7.2
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	8	8.2
Faculty of Psychology	7	7.2
Faculty of Economics and Business	5	5.2
Faculty of Science and Technology	17	17.5
Faculty of Health	2	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the respondents in this study represent 13 faculties, with the highest number of respondents from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, as many as 25 respondents, with a percentage of 25.8%, and the lowest respondents from the Faculty of Health, with only 2 respondents, or 2.1%. The following are the characteristics of the respondents based on their study programs can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Respondents by study program

Study Program	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Faculty of Ushuluddin</b>		
Hadits Science	2	2.06
Tasawuf Science	1	1.03
Al-Qur'an and Tafsir Studies	4	4.12
Religious Studies	1	1.03
<b>Faculty of Dirasah and Islamiyah</b>		
Dirasah Islamiyah	6	6.19
<b>Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching</b>		
Social Studies Education	1	1.03
Islamic Education	2	2.06
Chemistry Education	5	5.15
Physics Education	1	1.03
<b>Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences</b>		
Islamic Broadcasting Communication	2	2.06
Da'wah Management	10	10.31
Social Welfare	4	4.12
Islamic Community Development	5	5.15
Islamic Guidance and Counseling	5	2.06
Journalism	2	2.06
<b>Faculty of Arts and Humanities</b>		
Translation	1	1.03
English Literature	1	1.03
Arabic Literature	1	1.03
<b>Faculty of Syariah and Law</b>		
Law Science	1	1.03
Syariah Economic Law	2	2.06
Family Law	3	3.09
Islamic Criminal Law	1	1.03
<b>Faculty of Social and Political Sciences</b>		
Political Science	4	4.12
International Relations	3	3.09
Sociology	1	1.03
<b>Faculty of Psychology</b>		
Psychology	7	7.22
<b>Faculty of Economics and Business</b>		
Management	3	1.03

Study Program	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Accounting	2	2.06
Development Economics	1	1.03
<b>Faculty of Science and Technology</b>		
Mathematics	1	1.03
Physics	2	2.06
Chemistry	6	6.19
Biology	1	1.03
Agribusiness	4	4.12
Engineering Informatics	1	1.03
Information Systems	2	2.06
<b>Faculty of Health</b>		
Public Health	1	1.03
Pharmacy	1	1.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on Table 4 it shows that there are respondents from 38 study programs, with these programs spread across various academic clusters, including religious studies, social humanities, and science and technology. However, the majority of respondents based on study programs are from the social humanities cluster, followed by religious studies, and then science and technology. The inequality in the number of respondents based on study programs is because the institution's science is predominantly filled by religious and social humanities clumps of around 80% which are spread across various faculties.

## Instrument Testing Data

### 1. Validity Test Results

Quantitative validity test was conducted to assess the validity of each statement item, where the validity results were based on the comparison between the reality and the expectations of the respondents. The validity test was performed on 30 students who shared similar characteristics to the respondents in the actual study. The level of validity of each item with the level of reality and expectations has a validity of 100% with a r-count that has a significant value.

Table 5. Reality level validity test

Indicator	Item	r-table	r-count	Criteria
Tangibles	X1	0.361	.885**	Valid
	X2	0.361	.847**	Valid
	X3	0.361	.873**	Valid
	X4	0.361	.887**	Valid
Responsiveness	X5	0.361	.840**	Valid
	X6	0.361	.854**	Valid
	X7	0.361	.867**	Valid
	X8	0.361	.868**	Valid
Reliability	X9	0.361	.835**	Valid
	X10	0.361	.890**	Valid
	X11	0.361	.856**	Valid
	X12	0.361	.900**	Valid
Assurance	X13	0.361	.863**	Valid
	X14	0.361	.901**	Valid
	X15	0.361	.904**	Valid
	X16	0.361	.872**	Valid
Empathy	X17	0.361	.845**	Valid
	X18	0.361	.928**	Valid
	X19	0.361	.864**	Valid
	X20	0.361	.874**	Valid

Table 6. Validity test of expectation level

Indicator	Item	r-table	r-count	Criteria
Tangibles	X1	0.361	.912**	Valid
	X2	0.361	.929**	Valid
	X3	0.361	.944**	Valid
	X4	0.361	.907**	Valid
Responsiveness	X5	0.361	.895**	Valid
	X6	0.361	.929**	Valid
	X7	0.361	.877**	Valid
	X8	0.361	.919**	Valid
Reliability	X9	0.361	.895**	Valid
	X10	0.361	.937**	Valid
	X11	0.361	.980**	Valid
	X12	0.361	.911**	Valid
Assurance	X13	0.361	.923**	Valid
	X14	0.361	.971**	Valid
	X15	0.361	.925**	Valid
	X16	0.361	.968**	Valid
Empathy	X17	0.361	.922**	Valid

Indicator	Item	r-table	r-count	Criteria
	X18	0.361	.909**	Valid
	X19	0.361	.936**	Valid
	X20	0.361	.921**	Valid

Meanwhile, the validity test in the qualitative approach was conducted using the triangulation method. Triangulation is a technique for verifying and cross-checking data by comparing it with sources or criteria outside of the source in order to enhance the credibility and validity of the data.

## 2. Reliability Test Results

Reliability testing was conducted to measure the consistency of each statement item in the questionnaire. Based on the data below, it can be seen that the Cronbach's Alpha value for reality is 0.966 (Table 7).

Table 7. Reliability test of reality

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.966	20

In addition to the reality level, the reliability at the expectation level is 0.983 (Table 8). Therefore, the results of this reliability test indicate that the questionnaire distribution to the study respondents can be carried out.

Table 8. Expectation reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.983	20

While the qualitative reliability test was conducted by evaluating the interview results to ensure that there were no errors in the interview process or during the transcription of the interview results. Then, rechecking based on the results of interviews that have been conducted with expert judgment or supervisors in this study to find out any errors in the implementation process.

## Student Satisfaction

The results of the satisfaction distribution (Tabel 9) indicate that the overall level of student satisfaction with the MBKM program is low to moderate, reflecting that the services provided by the institution have not yet met the expectations of students. Student satisfaction in this study was measured using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = moderately satisfied, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = very satisfied (Joshi et al., 2015). This scale allows a structured interpretation of how respondents perceive and evaluate the quality of institutional services based on their experiences.

Table 9. Distribution of Satisfaction Score

Dimensions	Reality		Expectations	
	$\Sigma$ Score	Average	$\Sigma$ Score	Average
Tangibles				
Availability of a unit, division, or office that specifically handles the implementation of MBKM	241	2.48	407	4.20
Availability of guidelines, technical guidelines regarding the MBKM curriculum	257	2.65	410	4.23
Availability of access to information in the form of a web, portal, or special page to support MBKM	275	2.84	413	4.26
Availability of education personnel who assist in the implementation of MBKM	280	2.89	417	4.30
Reliability				
Competence of leaders (Rector, Dean, Head of Study Program) In understanding the MBKM policy	295	3.04	432	4.45
Competence of lecturers/mentors in understanding MBKM policy	300	3.09	428	4.41
Ability of education personnel in MBKM services	296	3.05	434	4.47
The ability of leaders, lecturers, and education staff to provide solutions to MBKM problems	298	3.07	431	4.44
Responsiveness				
Competence of leaders (University, LPM, Dean,	284	2.93	422	4.35

Dimensions	Reality		Expectations	
	$\Sigma$ Score	Average	$\Sigma$ Score	Average
Study Program) to solve MBKM problems				
Lecturer's competence in providing alternative solutions to MBKM complaints	280	2.86	417	4.30
Education personnel are quick and responsive to MBKM problems	263	2.71	415	4.28
Lecturers or supervisors always provide consultation time related to the implementation of MBKM	276	2.85	426	4.39
Assurance				
Leaders, lecturers, and education staff are friendly in serving MBKM	318	3.28	431	4.44
Leaders explain MBKM consistently	285	2.94	423	4.36
Lecturers provide detailed and systematic information related to the implementation of MBKM	292	3.01	427	4.40
Educational personnel provide clear information in the form of the MBKM administration flow	276	2.85	420	4.33
Empathy				
Leaders provide support for the implementation of MBKM	304	3.13	426	4.39
Lecturers give special attention to students who participate in MBKM	285	2.94	415	4.28
Education personnel are always up to date in providing MBKM information	280	2.89	424	4.37
Leaders, lecturers, and education staff always provide consultation time during the MBKM implementation process.	293	3.02	420	4.33

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that average satisfaction scores range between 2.48 and 3.28, which fall under the dissatisfied-to-moderately satisfied category. According to the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), these results indicate that the perceived quality of services remains below the level expected for optimal educational support.

Student satisfaction is largely determined by the institution's ability to provide consistent, reliable, and responsive services, along with tangible facilities, assurance, and empathy in academic interactions.

### 1. Tangibles

The Tangibles dimension assesses service quality based on the availability and condition of facilities, equipment, materials, and technology that can be directly experienced by users (Yunus Alaan, 2016). The results show that this dimension achieved the lowest satisfaction scores among all five dimensions, with mean values ranging from 2.48 to 2.89. The lowest satisfaction ( $\Sigma = 241$ ,  $M = 2.48$ ) was recorded for the availability of a unit, division, or office that specifically handles MBKM implementation, reflecting inadequate administrative structures and limited institutional readiness. Conversely, the highest mean ( $\Sigma = 280$ ,  $M = 2.89$ ) was found for the availability of educational personnel assisting MBKM implementation, suggesting that although personnel strive to be helpful, infrastructural and technological support remains insufficient. This finding aligns with Kotler and Keller's (2016) argument that physical evidence serves as a critical factor influencing perceptions of institutional credibility. Therefore, to improve satisfaction in this dimension, universities must strengthen their physical and digital infrastructures, develop web-based MBKM information systems, and ensure the consistent presence of staff who can assist students throughout the program's administrative and operational processes.

### 2. Reliability

The Reliability dimension measures the ability of the institution to deliver services accurately, consistently, and in accordance with student needs (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The mean scores for this dimension range between 3.04 and 3.09, indicating a moderate or neutral level of satisfaction. The highest average ( $\Sigma = 300$ ,  $M = 3.09$ ) was found in the competence of lecturers and mentors in understanding MBKM policy, followed by the education personnel's ability to deliver MBKM services ( $\Sigma = 296$ ,  $M = 3.05$ ). These findings suggest that while academic personnel are perceived as knowledgeable and competent, institutional processes supporting MBKM implementation are not yet optimized for consistency and reliability. As stated by Zeithaml et al. (2020), reliability represents the core component of service quality because users form their trust

based on repeated accuracy in service delivery. Hence, to enhance reliability, continuous capacity-building programs and the establishment of clear MBKM standard operating procedures (SOPs) are essential.

### 3. Responsiveness

The Responsiveness dimension evaluates how promptly and willingly institutional actors assist students and address their needs (Grönroos, 2007). Satisfaction scores in this category are generally low, ranging between 2.71 and 2.95. The lowest mean score ( $\Sigma = 263$ ,  $M = 2.71$ ) was found for education personnel's quickness and responsiveness to MBKM problems, implying that delays and lack of proactive communication hinder effective service delivery. The highest mean ( $\Sigma = 284$ ,  $M = 2.95$ ) was recorded for leaders' competence in solving MBKM problems. According to Ladhari (2009), responsiveness is crucial in shaping user satisfaction, as it represents an organization's ability to adapt and react to service needs efficiently. Therefore, universities must develop faster feedback channels, such as digital helpdesks or real-time consultation systems, to improve responsiveness and strengthen students' perceptions of supportive institutional behavior.

### 4. Assurance

The Assurance dimension concerns the competence, courtesy, and credibility of staff in delivering services that instill confidence in students (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This dimension received satisfaction scores ranging from 2.98 to 3.28, which correspond to moderately satisfied perceptions. The highest mean ( $\Sigma = 318$ ,  $M = 3.28$ ) pertains to leaders, lecturers, and staff being friendly in serving MBKM, while the lowest mean ( $\Sigma = 292$ ,  $M = 2.98$ ) relates to educational personnel providing clear information about MBKM administrative procedures. This result indicates that interpersonal behavior is positively viewed by students, but clarity and systematic information dissemination remain lacking. According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction arises not only from performance outcomes but also from the confidence users feel in the service process. Therefore, increasing transparency, improving staff communication skills, and providing detailed procedural guidance are vital strategies for improving assurance.

## 5. Empathy

The Empathy dimension reflects the degree of personal attention and understanding that staff and leaders show toward students' needs (Zeithaml et al., 2020). Satisfaction levels in this dimension range between 2.92 and 3.13, signifying moderately satisfied perceptions. The highest mean ( $\Sigma = 304$ ,  $M = 3.13$ ) was recorded for leaders providing support for MBKM implementation, while the lowest ( $\Sigma = 292$ ,  $M = 2.92$ ) was observed in leaders, lecturers, and staff providing consultation time during MBKM implementation. According to Grönroos (2007), empathy represents the humanistic component of service quality that builds emotional connection and loyalty. Therefore, the institution should establish consistent mentoring schedules, active academic counseling, and inclusive communication practices to strengthen empathetic engagement with students.

Based on all five SERVQUAL dimensions, the overall student satisfaction toward MBKM services falls within the 2.48–3.28 range on the Likert scale, which corresponds to the dissatisfied-to-moderately satisfied level. This result indicates that while academic staff and leaders demonstrate adequate interpersonal engagement, institutional systems, responsiveness, and infrastructure are not yet fully optimized. According to Oliver's (1999) cumulative satisfaction theory, satisfaction is the result of repeated evaluations of service experiences. The consistent "moderately" scores across dimensions imply that students have not yet experienced service performance that exceeds their expectations. Consequently, to enhance satisfaction, higher education institutions must adopt an integrated strategy that simultaneously improves tangibles, ensures reliability, accelerates responsiveness, strengthens assurance, and deepens empathy across all MBKM-related services.

### Gap Level

The gap level based on the average score is categorized according to the following scale: very dissatisfied (0.01 – 1.00), dissatisfied (1.01 – 2.00), moderately satisfied (2.01 – 3.00), satisfied (3.01 – 4.00), and very satisfied (4.01 – 5.00) as seen in Table 10. The calculation is performed by subtracting the average reality score from the expectation score. The calculation of the service quality gap follows the SERVQUAL approach formulated by Parasuraman et al. (1988), where the gap score is derived from the difference between perceived service (P) and expected service (E), expressed as  $\text{Gap} = P - E$ . A positive value indicates that perceived performance exceeds expectations

(indicating satisfaction), while a negative value demonstrates that expectations surpass reality, suggesting areas where the service requires improvement.

The results of the study show an average score of -1.42. The gap score is used to determine the extent of the difference between the expectations of students regarding the service and the reality, or what students directly experience. The following is a table showing the distribution of gap values related to the implementation of the policy:

Table 10. Distribution of Gap Values

Dimensions	Reality	Expectations	Value	Category
Tangibles	2.71	4.24	-1.53	Not Satisfied
Reliability	3.06	4.45	-1.38	Not Satisfied
Responsiveness	2.84	4.33	-1.49	Not Satisfied
Assurance	3.02	4.38	-1.37	Not Satisfied
Empathy	2.99	4.34	-1.35	Not Satisfied
Total	2.92	4.34	-1.42	Not Satisfied

In this study, the average gap score is 1.42, indicating that overall student satisfaction with the MBKM services is low, and the perceived reality of service provision remains significantly below expectations. This negative gap suggests that although students view the MBKM program as important and necessary, institutional performance has not yet met their expectations.

The gap score serves as a diagnostic indicator, showing the degree of mismatch between what students expect and what they experience regarding MBKM policy implementation. The detailed distribution of gap values, as shown in Table 10, demonstrates that across all five SERVQUAL dimensions, the category consistently falls under "Not Satisfied." The results are as follows: Tangibles (-1.53), Reliability (-1.38), Responsiveness (-1.49), Assurance (-1.37), and Empathy (-1.35), with an overall total average of -1.42.

The largest gap is found in Tangibles, indicating that students perceive institutional facilities, infrastructure, and technological tools to be inadequate in supporting MBKM activities. Conversely, the smallest gap appears in Empathy, suggesting that interpersonal support and understanding from staff and lecturers are relatively better, though still below expectations. According to Oliver's Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (1980, 1997), satisfaction arises when perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations, while dissatisfaction occurs when performance falls short. In this context, the negative disconfirmation reflected in the 1.42 gap shows that students consistently perceive the MBKM services as underperforming relative to their expectations. This is further supported by Grönroos' (2007) service quality

model, which emphasizes that both technical quality (the tangible results and systems) and functional quality (the delivery process and interaction) influence user satisfaction.

The data suggest that both aspects especially the technical quality require institutional strengthening. The results also align with the Five-Gap Model of Service Quality by Parasuraman et al. (1985), which identifies potential discrepancies in organizational service delivery. The consistently negative results imply the presence of: a knowledge gap, where the institution misinterprets students' MBKM needs; a design gap, reflecting that the service framework is not yet effectively aligned with those needs; a delivery gap, indicating inconsistencies in implementation; and a communication gap, where institutional information about MBKM does not match actual experiences. All these factors contribute to Gap 5 the perception gap, which this study directly measures and which captures the difference between student expectations and perceived service quality. The findings highlight the need to address institutional readiness, as emphasized by Al-Harathi and Karp (2019), who argue that educational innovation such as MBKM requires adequate organizational capacity, digital infrastructure, and adaptive culture. The high student expectations observed in this study are consistent with the MBKM program's transformative goals, which emphasize autonomy, experiential learning, and institutional flexibility.

However, the significant negative gap indicates that these aspirations have not yet been fully realized in practice. In practical terms, the gap results suggest several policy implications for MBKM implementation. First, the high gap in Tangibles (-1.53) calls for investment in learning infrastructure, digital platforms, and administrative systems that facilitate MBKM activities. Second, the gap in Responsiveness (-1.49) highlights the need for faster communication channels and clearer procedural guidance to support students during program participation. Third, although Empathy (-1.35) has the smallest gap, institutions must still strengthen mentoring and advisory systems to provide more personalized support. These improvements are aligned with Zeithaml et al. (2020), who argue that consistent enhancement of both physical and human service components is necessary to build sustainable user satisfaction.

In summary, the 1.42 average gap score confirms that the institution's service quality in MBKM implementation remains below student expectations across all SERVQUAL dimensions. This finding underscores the urgency for universities to strengthen service management, align administrative procedures with student-centered values, and enhance infrastructure readiness. Addressing these gaps not only improves satisfaction but also ensures that MBKM achieves its intended function as a transformative

learning ecosystem, one that empowers students through flexible, inclusive, and high-quality educational experiences.

### **Institutional Readiness**

The Interviews with stakeholders at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta reveal that institutional readiness for MBKM implementation remains limited and in transition, with strategic discussions still ongoing at the university, faculty, and study program levels. The institution shows strong policy commitment but insufficient operational capacity, reflecting a structural-functional imbalance between planning and execution. The interviews indicate that the university has initiated several internal measures, curriculum redesign, socialization programs, and partnership expansion to align with MBKM objectives. However, these efforts are constrained by fragmented coordination, unclear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), limited administrative resources, and inadequate digital infrastructure. This condition aligns with Weiner's (2009) model of organizational readiness for change, which emphasizes that readiness depends on both institutional commitment and collective capability. Stakeholders acknowledged that MBKM services vary across faculties due to the absence of standardized mechanisms, confirming Lipsky's (1980) Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory, where implementation outcomes rely heavily on individual discretion when institutional systems are weak. This inconsistency contributes to the low satisfaction and negative service quality gap (-1.42) observed in the quantitative results.

Externally, implementation challenges stem from policy fluidity, regulatory complexity, and uneven support from partner institutions, reflecting what Hill and Hupe (2014) identify as a policy-context misalignment. Although collaborations with government, industry, and NGOs exist, they remain project-based and unsustainable, limiting MBKM's long-term impact. From a theoretical standpoint, UIN's condition illustrates a "commitment-capacity gap" (Al-Harhi & Karp, 2019): the institution demonstrates normative alignment with MBKM ideals but lacks technical and infrastructural readiness to realize them effectively. Strengthening readiness thus requires: Policy standardization through clear SOPs and MBKM indicators; Administrative and digital capacity building to improve service reliability; Sustainable partnerships for consistent experiential learning; and Governance integration, embedding MBKM in performance and quality assurance systems. In line with Kotter's (1996) Change Management Model, UIN must shift from reactive adaptation toward proactive institutionalization ensuring that MBKM evolves from a compliance-driven policy into a sustainable, transformative academic culture.

*"Directly, we always strive to provide the best for the students, but again, we realize that various limitations certainly require time to address these issues, due to the differing characteristics of the institution and, of course, the different approaches." - DM.*

In addition to the internal aspects mentioned, the institution's readiness is also influenced by the flexibility of the institution in implementing the policy.

*"We need to understand that UIN or this PTKIN university is different from others, so the approach must also be different. Our academic focus is dominated by Islamic studies and social humanities. Therefore, if MBKM is expected to align with the business world and the industrial world, the standards are too low, and the alignment with us also requires a very thorough and in-depth study." - FF.*

Externally, the institution's readiness is certainly influenced by the readiness of regulators to issue comprehensive policies, not merely recommendations or regulations. Beyond that, it involves the readiness of infrastructure and supporting facilities for the implementation of the policy.

*"Internally, it is certainly very disruptive because the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in addition to issuing regulations, should also provide supporting infrastructure, such as administrative reporting. This has not been maximized yet; it only began around 2023, which has greatly disrupted our processes at the implementing institution." - MR.*

Another external factor is the lack of seriousness from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which impacts the implementation of services at the implementing institution. The overlap between policies from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs is one of the fundamental issues causing the overlap in the implementation of this policy.

*"We know that this policy is primarily a legal product and regulation issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Therefore, the policy implementation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs is less than optimal because it is just a copy-paste and waiting for further derivative policies. If it's hard for us, whose institution is already accredited as A, how about other institutions? We also know that there are limitations, disparities, and differences in quality. Additionally, it is certainly difficult to understand the intent and implement it in university policies while providing good services." - DM.*

Institutional readiness factors in addition to interpreting the intent and purpose of the policy, of course, there are also several factors that cause low student or academic community satisfaction with implementation. The

seriousness and commitment of the regulatory institution are essential, not just in executing regulations but also in providing facilitation across various aspects. This ensures that the service implementation can run optimally and provide transparency regarding access to information and other supporting aspects for students. As a result, it can address the issues concerning what students need during the policy implementation process.

## **Research Exploration**

### **1. Position of Institution in the MBKM Framework**

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, as a state Islamic higher education institution with Public Service Agency (BLU) status and "A" accreditation (BAN-PT Decree No. 25/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/PT/II/2018), occupies a significant position among Indonesian universities implementing the MBKM policy. Its hybrid orientation, integrating Islamic studies and modern sciences, forms both a distinctive strength and a systemic challenge in aligning with MBKM's philosophy of academic freedom and interdisciplinary collaboration. The integration of religion and science in UIN's curriculum demands not only intellectual synthesis but also institutional transformation. As Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory posits, true learning occurs when students reframe existing paradigms through critical reflection. The MBKM should function not merely as an administrative reform but as a pedagogical catalyst that encourages contextual reinterpretation of religious values within scientific and social realities. Without this transformation, the institutional mission risks remaining symbolic rather than functional in addressing contemporary societal issues.

### **2. Alignment and Strategic Readiness for the MBKM Program**

Empirical data and interviews reveal that UIN's alignment with MBKM remains at the normative compliance stage, characterized by partial adaptation to national frameworks but limited institutional consolidation. This reflects what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe as normative isomorphism, where conformity to external policy standards occurs without substantial internal innovation. Stakeholder interviews show that efforts such as curriculum revision, policy dissemination, and partnership expansion are ongoing but fragmented. This fragmentation is consistent with the implementation gap theory (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980), indicating that strong policy intentions are often undermined by contextual and operational constraints. Such barriers explain the institution's low satisfaction and large negative gap scores (-1.42), as institutional responsiveness to MBKM expectations remains hindered by bureaucratic structures and uneven digital infrastructure. To move beyond compliance, UIN must develop contextualized

MBKM models that integrate religious ethics and experiential learning. This requires strengthening organizational readiness, encompassing leadership alignment, procedural standardization, and digital support systems (Weiner, 2009). Through this approach, MBKM becomes an embedded institutional culture rather than an external mandate.

### 3. The seriousness of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

Since 2020 the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama) has adopted MBKM-aligned policies to synchronize with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). However, this alignment largely remains administrative and reactive. Derivative policies still mirror MOEC's models without sufficient contextual adaptation to PTKIN's unique epistemological and institutional identity. The establishment of the Merpati Portal in 2023 is a step toward digital integration, yet it still faces interoperability and accessibility issues, reflecting *implementation fragmentation* (Hill & Hupe, 2014). This underscores the necessity for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to adopt a differentiated policy model, one that views institutional diversity as a source of innovation rather than deviation from the norm.

In the MBKM context, PTKIN institutions should redefine MBKM through a religious and ethical lens, integrating civic responsibility, scientific innovation, and religious moderation. Such contextual differentiation supports Al-Harhi and Karp's (2019) argument that successful educational innovation requires harmonizing institutional identity with readiness for change.

### 4. Synthesis and Policy Implications

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta reveals a persistent structural imbalance between institutional ambition and operational capacity. The consistent negative gap across all SERVQUAL dimensions reflects a systemic misalignment where policy compliance does not translate into service excellence or pedagogical transformation. This dynamic exemplifies what may be termed a commitment–capacity paradox—a situation in which strong institutional commitment to MBKM ideals is constrained by limited managerial, infrastructural, and technological readiness (Oliver, 1997; Zeithaml et al., 2020). Within the broader context of Islamic higher education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), similar patterns are observed. MBKM has been largely interpreted administratively rather than epistemologically, focusing on procedural conformity rather than curricular and pedagogical integration (Al-Harhi & Karp, 2019).

By contrast, leading public universities under the Directorate General of Higher Education (DIKTI), such as Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) and Universitas Indonesia (UI), exhibit more mature MBKM ecosystems through structured governance, robust digital platforms, and strategic partnerships with industry stakeholders (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). These institutions demonstrate that MBKM success depends not only on policy adoption but on the internal coherence of institutional systems that enable innovation, autonomy, and adaptive learning (Yamin & Syahrir, 2022). From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of service quality and institutional alignment frameworks (Grönroos, 2007; Zeithaml et al., 2020) in evaluating higher education reforms.

The observed service gap underscores that effective policy implementation requires synergy between technical quality (infrastructure, governance, and systems) and functional quality (communication, responsiveness, and academic culture). In Islamic higher education, this synergy must be contextualized epistemologically, integrating religious values and scientific inquiry as a unified basis for innovation and service ethics (Azra, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the overall quality of MBKM program service delivery at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta remains below institutional and student expectations, evidenced by an average satisfaction score of 2.92 and an overall gap score of -1.42 (expectation = 4.34; perception = 2.92). This negative discrepancy across all SERVQUAL dimensions—Tangibles (-1.53), Reliability (-1.38), Responsiveness (-1.49), Assurance (-1.37), and Empathy (-1.35) indicates a systemic shortfall in service performance. The most critical weakness lies in Tangibles, signaling infrastructural and technological inadequacies that hinder the operationalization of MBKM. While the relatively smaller gap in Empathy reflects stronger interpersonal engagement, it remains insufficient to offset broader structural deficiencies.

This condition reflects a commitment-capacity paradox: institutional willingness to comply with MBKM policy is not matched by adequate systemic readiness. Consistent with Oliver's (1997) Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory and Zeithaml et al. (2020) service alignment model, the persistent negative gap demonstrates misalignment between policy ambition and institutional capability. Without structural recalibration, MBKM risks devolving into bureaucratic compliance administratively correct yet pedagogically hollow.

Addressing the -1.42 gap, therefore, requires more than managerial adjustments; it demands epistemic reorientation, leadership transformation,

and governance reform. MBKM should be reframed not as a top-down directive but as a value-based educational ecosystem that harmonizes intellectual rigor, ethical consciousness, and social responsibility. For UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, this entails reinforcing academic leadership, expanding digital and infrastructural readiness, and integrating faith-science paradigms within the curriculum to foster creative, contextually grounded learning experiences.

At the policy level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama) must urgently shift from administrative adaptation to epistemological contextualization. MBKM program implementation within Islamic higher education requires differentiated policies aligned with each institution's vision, resources, and epistemic framework. The current one-size-fits-all model produces asymmetrical outcomes, where students become victims of systemic unpreparedness rather than beneficiaries of educational innovation. A critical restructuring of the Ministry of Religious Affairs MBKM program governance is thus imperative, prioritizing transparency, inter-institutional collaboration, data-driven evaluation, and active student representation in policy formulation. Only through such structural and epistemic reform can the MBKM program achieve its transformative intent: producing graduates who are not merely compliant learners but empowered agents of change, intellectually autonomous, ethically grounded, and socially responsible, embodying the principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* within modern higher education.

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