Readiness for sustainable accreditation management in higher education institutions: A mixed-method study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Obtaining an excellent accreditation rank in various study programs has become an urgency for universities in Indonesia because accreditation rankings are believed to have an impact on the provision of quality education. However, not all universities are able to achieve an excellent accreditation rank for all of the study programs they manage. This research aims to determine the readiness of the accreditation teams in managing accreditation in various study programs. The mixed method is used, with an explanatory sequential design. The participants involved are university leaders and accreditation teams in various study programs. The research results showed that an excellent accreditation rating cannot be achieved with ordinary organizational behavior but requires great effort, care, and commitment from both the leaders and the accreditation team. It also requires active and comprehensive participation from the academic community. The excellent rank in accreditation can only be obtained with superior effort and care. It is suggested that the readiness of the leaders and accreditation teams to manage accreditation optimally is a crucial aspect in achieving an excellent rating. In conclusion, there are at least three important aspects to consider in the accreditation process in order to achieve an excellent rank: the need to achieve the highest assessment, the effort and care needed to significantly impact the highest assessment, and the institution needs to ensure a quality culture through quality assurance and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Contribution/Originality: This article contributes to identifying various aspects that have an impact on achieving an excellent accreditation rating at universities. The research found that the seriousness of the leaders in managing accreditation and the readiness of the accreditation team to work extra hard are crucial aspects in realizing an excellent accreditation rating.

1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education in various countries at various levels of education, especially higher education levels, can be done by implementing a quality assurance system (Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). The implementation of a sustainable education quality assurance system seeks to improve the quality of education and build a quality culture in every educational institution (Chua & Lam, 2007). The implementation of a quality assurance system is also intended to ensure that the entire process of providing education is in accordance with

established education quality standards set out in a country's policy (Buzdar & Jalal, 2019; Jalal, Buzdar, & Mohsin, 2017). There are two types of parties involved in implementing a quality assurance system, namely internal and external (Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). The Internal Quality Assurance System is a comprehensive component consisting of policies and procedures aimed at guaranteeing the quality of education provided by each educational institution. It aims to ensure the provision of education that meets or exceeds the National Education Standards. The external quality assurance system refers to the comprehensive aspects of the organization, policies and processes involved in supporting and evaluating the feasibility and level of quality of educational units through accreditation (Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017). Therefore, universities must have a good quality assurance and accreditation management system (Jasti, Venkateswaran, Kota, & Sangwan, 2022).

In Indonesia, the accreditation ranking of study programs in higher education institutions is divided into three categories: good, very good, and excellent (Sunarto, 2017). If a study program is accredited as excellent, it will increase the university's reputation and provide quality assurance for the educational process (Fernandes & Singh, 2022). Not all universities in Indonesia implement strict accreditation management to pursue the highest reputation of their universities. One of the faculties in the province of Kalimantan in Indonesia, showed poor management of accreditation. Of the 29 study programs, only two have been accredited as excellent. This indicates that there are problems in managing accreditation or quality assurance at the university, faculty, and study program levels. This research was conducted to investigate the actual conditions in accreditation management. This is important so that universities can improve their accreditation management and improve the quality of education that students receive.

Previous research conducted by Al-Mahdy and Emam (2022) which investigated the mediated effect model of organizational support and citizenship behavior, showed that organizational support significantly contributes to increasing citizenship behavior and the commitment of the university toward program accreditation as a process of positive university change. Javed and Alenezi (2023) did a case study on sustainable quality assurance in higher education, and the results emphasized the importance of universities adopting a proactive approach to addressing the challenges that organizations face in system development and integration. Meanwhile, Dupra and Ormilla (2023) conducted research to assess the level of readiness of higher education universities regarding horizontal typologies, institutional sustainability, and quality assurance in key result areas to improve mechanisms, systems, and policies for increased effectiveness of higher education operations. The research, among others, showed that the most identified challenges that influence the level of readiness of higher education institutions in horizontal typology are lack of innovation, technology, and sustainability; lack of administrative strategies, leadership competencies, and management skills; and lack of financial allocation for institutional development and progress.

Previous research has not investigated how prepared sustainable accreditation management in a faculty is based on its efforts and care. Therefore, this research is directed at exploring accreditation management in terms of readiness for sustainable accreditation management. This research has to be carried out to prove that achieving excellent accreditation requires organizational management that is oriented toward a quality culture through the rationalization of academic work and clarity of work practices, which can increase the 'intentionality, transparency and stability of educational institutions' (Legemaate, Grol, Huisman, Oolbekkink–Marchand, & Nieuwenhuis, 2022; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). It is important to improve the quality of education and build a quality culture in every educational institution (Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023).

Based on the aforementioned, this research seeks to explore the issues of higher education accreditation management in one of the universities in the province of Kalimantan, Indonesia, which are formulated in two research questions below.

Q1: Does the readiness of the accreditation team influence the achievement of an excellent accreditation rating?

Q2: Are the effort and concern of the accreditation team related to achieving excellent accreditation?

Based on the two questions above, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: There is an influence of the accreditation team's readiness on achieving an excellent accreditation rating.

H2: There is a relationship between the effort and concern of the accreditation team and achieving an excellent accreditation rating.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Accreditation Management

Accreditation is a review procedure used by accreditation institutions to assess the quality of universities, colleges, and study programs to ensure and improve quality assurance (Seamon, 2010). Accreditation functions as a mechanism to ensure quality control or assurance (Brittingham, 2008). Harvey (2004) mentioned four important roles of accreditation, namely supporting and improving the quality of higher education, preserving the academic principles inherent in this domain, meeting the interests and demands of society, and protecting against the influence of undue political factors in the field of higher education. Therefore, in establishing the quality and legality of study programs, universities and colleges actively seek accreditation to demonstrate the quality and legitimacy of their programs to gain recognition from accreditation institutions (Hail, Hurst, Chang, & Cooper, 2019). Based on this concept, there are at least two forms of accreditation—university accreditation and program accreditation. The first form critically evaluates the comprehensive aspects of the university, focusing on the academic and organizational framework, while the second form offers a detailed evaluation of specific specialized or professional programs offered by the university (Alkhateeb & Romanowski, 2021). Accreditation provides confidence to the community, students and other stakeholders that educational institutions or programs meet the established criteria for educational excellence; therefore, accreditation administration is of the utmost importance (Al-Mahdy & Emam, 2022; Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017; Michelli, Dada, Eldridge, Tamim, & Karp, 2016).

2.2. Accreditation: Pros and Cons

Accreditation, both at the institutional and program levels, is widely recognized as a prominent quality assurance mechanism in the global higher education landscape (González, 2005). For some universities, the accreditation process is used as a form of continuous improvement and, in others, as a way to achieve minimum operational standards (Gerón-Piñón, Solana-González, Trigueros-Preciado, & Pérez-González, 2021; Rodríguez-Ponce, Fleet, & Delgado, 2009). When a university loses accreditation, it loses credibility not only among other universities but also among the businesses that employ its graduates. Thus, accreditation is an important topic for universities around the world (Gerón-Piñón et al., 2021) as accreditation results have a direct impact on students, universities, and the regional higher education system.

Supporters of the accreditation system view accreditation functions as a validation of graduate competency and show that the graduates have been well prepared for practice at a high level (Redelsheimer, Boldenow, & Marshall, 2015). Accreditation is also an important component that facilitates self-assessment and encourages sustainable development in higher education institutions and programs (Kumar, Shukla, & Passey, 2020). In addition, accredited universities and programs are more likely to recruit and graduate high-quality students and faculty (Michelli et al., 2016).

On the other hand, the process of implementing accreditation has also received criticism for applying centralized control to the program (Bullough Jr, 2014). Additionally, it has been argued that professional standards introduce and validate some information, dispositions, and abilities while ignoring others (Yinger, 1987). Moreover, the procedures mentioned have a negative impact on the role of professors (Hail et al., 2019) and requires large financial input (Willis, 1994).

However, regardless of the pros and cons related to accreditation, it requires the institutional leaders and other stakeholders to understand the accreditation process and how the process provides understanding to the relevant constituents (Mussawy & Rossman, 2021).

2.3. Accreditation Management Through an Internal Quality Assurance System

Quality assurance and accreditation are two important concepts in various sectors, especially the education sector (Alkhateeb & Romanowski, 2021; Gerón-Piñón et al., 2021; Mussawy & Rossman, 2021). Universities make efforts to achieve accreditation by implementing a quality assurance system. Conceptually, quality assurance is a series of processes, policies, and practices designed to ensure that the products or services provided by an organization meet predetermined standards (Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). If the accreditation process is carried out by external parties, quality assurance is carried out by internal parties. Internal quality assurance is the process by which educational institutions evaluate their own performance in relation to the overall quality of their activities (Do, Le, & Giang, 2020).

The operation of the internal quality assurance (IQA) system is based on self-assessment, which provides complete data regarding every aspect of an educational institution (Buzdar & Jalal, 2019; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). Through IQA activities, independent assessments provide an in-depth evaluation of the activities of educational institutions. Therefore, the operation of an IQA system requires transparency, accountability, the right approach, and the capacity to assess individual capabilities across all organizational activities (Mohamedbhai, 2006). IQA activities include a series of mechanisms and processes designed to monitor, research, assess, enforce, guarantee, and improve the quality and responsibility of specific processes and procedures within an academic institution. The real impact of quality assurance is the formation of structural and organizational processes and procedures. These produce new monitoring systems and data handling activities for educational performance and quality (Nguyen, 2018; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023; Stensaker, Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman, & Westerheijden, 2011; Westerheijden, Hulpiau, & Waeytens, 2007).

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This research used mixed methods with quantitative and qualitative approaches. The design used was sequential explanatory, in which the quantitative results being interpreted with qualitative results (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). This mixed-method research was aimed to identify the level of readiness of universities in managing accreditation using quantitative data, which was then interpreted with qualitative data, so that the conditions for accreditation management could be explored clearly and comprehensively. Qualitative approaches were also used to obtain intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or study through conventional methods (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Julia, Subarjah, et al., 2020).

3.2. Research Population

The research was conducted at Tangjungpura University, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The research population is the accreditation team from all study programs at the university, totaling 29 (100%) study programs from nine faculties. This university was chosen because the accreditation conditions for the majority of study programs had not yet reached an excellent level. The survey was distributed to all 29 (100%) study programs; however, only 15 (52%) were willing to participate and return the survey. Therefore, the research sample comprised data from 15 study programs that had not achieved accreditation at the excellent level. Table 1 shows the data on the participants who were willing to complete and return the survey. Meanwhile, there were 23 participants who were willing to be interviewed from the 15 study programs. The participants who were willing to be interviewed consisted of one vice dean, three heads of study programs, and 19 lecturers from the accreditation team. We asked for approval from the university, faculties, and study programs for this research. All participants who returned the survey stated that they were willing to provide objective data based on their respective experiences in managing accreditation.

Table 1. Respondent demographics.

Respondent demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	8	53.33
Female	7	46.67
Age (Years)		
26–30	3	20.00
31–35	1	6.67
41–45	4	26.67
46–50	5	33.33
56–60	2	13.33
Status		
Head of the study program	3	20.00
Lecturer in the accreditation team	12	80.00
Homebase		
Strata 1/Bachelor	13	86.67
Strata 2/Magister	1	6.67
Strata 3/Doctor	1	6.67
Experience in accreditation (Years)		
1–5	8	53.33
6–10	1	6.67
11–15	4	26.67
16–20	1	6.67
31–35	1	6.67

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Quantitative Instrument

The instrument used to collect quantitative data was a questionnaire with a total of 82 questions and statements. The instrument was divided into one question topic regarding the existing accreditation conditions and nine statement topics covering the readiness for accreditation.

3.3.2. Qualitative Instrument

Open questions were used to collect qualitative data. The questions were divided into 10 topics; one topic explored the profile and conditions of quality assurance, and nine topics investigated nine accreditation criteria: (1) vision, mission, goals, and strategies, (2) governance system and governance policy, and cooperation, (3) students, (4) human resources, (5) finance, facilities, and infrastructure, (6) education, (7) research, (8) community service, and (9) the three pillars of higher education output and achievements.

3.4. Validity and Reliability Test

The survey instrument was tested for validity on 23 study programs using the Pearson correlation, with the results of all items being declared valid. The smallest Pearson correlation value was 0.463, and the largest value was 0.888. Meanwhile, the reliability test was carried out using Cronbach's alpha, and the instrument was declared reliable, with a value of 0.753.

3.5. Data Analysis

3.5.1. Quantitative Data

The quantitative data obtained through questionnaires was processed and presented in the forms of frequency, percentage, and mean analysis of indicators in each aspect of accreditation. Meanwhile, to analyze the relationship between effort, care, and accreditation achievement, Kendall's tau-b analysis was used. The results of calculating the mean of each accreditation indicator were interpreted into a sustainable accreditation management readiness ranking consisting of five levels of ranking, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sustainable accreditation management readiness ranking scale.

Scale	Interpretation	Sustainable accreditation management readiness condition
4.50–5.00	Very high	Effort, care, integrity, and best practice are very good
3.50–4.49	High	Effort, care, integrity, and best practice are good
2.50–3.49	Medium	Effort, care, integrity, and best practice are rather poor
1.50–2.49	Low	Effort, care, integrity, and best practice are poor
1.00–1.49	Very low	Effort, care, integrity, and best practice very poor

3.5.2. Qualitative Data

The qualitative data obtained through distributing open questions was processed and analyzed using NVivo software. Coding and categorization were conducted to develop themes in the findings. Based on the data processing results, 157 statements were produced from the participants, and four themes were produced as findings and discussion material. The four themes are discussed in depth as part of the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Quantitative Findings

4.1.1. Profiles of University and Faculties

Table 3 shows that the university that participated in this research had 29 study programs in nine faculties. However, only five (17.24%) study programs received the highest accreditation rank (excellent), while the majority (82.76%) were still ranked as very good.

Table 3. University profile.

University profile	Sum
Number of faculties	9
Number of study programs	29
University accreditation rank	A
Study program accreditation rank	
Not accredited	0
Accredited - good	0
Accredited - very good	24
Accredited - excellent	5
Number of university ISO certificates	0
Number of faculty ISO certificates	0

4.1.2. Readiness regarding Criterion 1: Vision, Mission, Goals, and Strategy Aspects

Table 4 shows that the five readiness indicators in the VMGS aspect were in the 3.93–4.13 range. This means that this aspect was at level four on the ranking scale (3.50–4.49). Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the first criterion is high.

Table 4. Readiness in vision, mission, goals, and strategy (VMGS) aspects.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. The existence of policies and implementation of the faculty's VMGS preparation	3.93	High
2. Conformity of the scientific vision and objectives of the study program with the faculty's VMGS	4.07	High
3. Realistic scientific vision and objectives of the study program	4.13	High
4. Clarity of strategy and stages in achieving the scientific vision and objectives of the study program	4.07	High
5. Level of understanding of the scientific vision and objectives of the study program	4.07	High
Total average	4.05	High

4.1.3. Readiness regarding Criterion 2: Governance System, Governance Policy, and Cooperation Aspects

Table 5 shows that the six readiness indicators in the aspects of governance system, governance policy, and cooperation are in the range 3.60–3.80. This means that this aspect is at level four on the ranking scale, namely the range 3.50–4.49. Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the second criterion is high.

Table 2. Readiness in governance system, governance policy, and cooperation aspects.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Existence of policies and implementation of governance system, governance policy, leadership, cooperation, and quality assurance in the faculty	3.73	High
2. Faculty governance system	3.73	High
3. Faculty governance policy	3.60	High
4. Faculty leadership	3.60	High
5. Cooperation policies and implementation	3.73	High
6. Scope of cooperation	3.80	High
Total average	3.70	High

4.1.4. Readiness regarding Criterion 3: Student Aspect

Table 6 shows that the seven readiness indicators in the student aspect are in the range of 3.53–3.87. This means that this aspect is at level four on the ranking scale (3.50–4.49). Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the third criterion is high.

Table 6. Readiness in the student aspect.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Existence of policies and implementation of student affairs programs	3.67	High
2. Recruitment of prospective students	3.87	High
3. Interest/Aptitude test in the field of education and becoming a prospective educator	3.60	High
4. Student service system in the learning process	3.73	High
5. Quality of student input	3.60	High
6. Appeals of the study program	3.87	High
7. Student origin profile	3.53	High
Total average	3.70	High

4.1.5. Readiness regarding Criterion 4: Human Resources Aspect

Table 7 shows that the sixteen readiness indicators in the human resources aspect are in the range of 3.53–4.20. This means that this aspect is at level four on the rating scale (3.50–4.49). Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the fourth criterion is high.

Table 3. Readiness in the human resources aspect.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. The existence of policies and implementation of lecturers and educational staff in the faculty	3.93	High
2. Recruitment of permanent lecturers in the study program	3.67	High
3. Academic qualifications of permanent lecturers in the study program	3.87	High
4. Academic position of permanent lecturers in the study program	3.73	High
5. Ratio of lecturers to students	3.87	High
6. Teaching attendance of permanent lecturers in the study program	4.20	High
7. Number of students guided for the final project/thesis	3.87	High
8. Achievements of permanent lecturers in the study program	3.73	High
9. Competence and carrier development of permanent lecturers in the study program through sustainable professional activities	3.93	High
10. Educational staff recruitment	3.60	High
11. Educational staff profile	3.60	High

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
12. Competence and carrier development of educational staff	3.53	High
13. Implementation of monitoring policies	3.60	High
14. Rewards, sanctions, and termination of employment for lecturers and educational staff	3.60	High
15. Satisfaction survey mechanism, satisfaction level	3.60	High
16. Feedback from lecturers and educational staff regarding HR management	3.53	High
Total average	3.74	High

4.1.6. Readiness regarding Criterion 5: Financial, Facilities, and Infrastructure Aspects

Table 8 shows that the seven readiness indicators in the financial, facilities and infrastructure aspects are in two ranges, namely the 3.40–3.47 range and the 3.53–4.20 range. This means that this aspect is divided into two ranking scales at level three (2.50–3.49) and level four (3.50–4.49). Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the fifth criterion is medium for three indicators and high for four indicators.

Table 8. Readiness in the financial, facilities, and infrastructure aspects.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Existence of policies and implementation of finance, facilities, and infrastructure	3.67	High
2. Education operational costs	3.73	High
3. Research operational costs	3.60	High
4. Community service operational costs	3.47	Medium
5. Publication operational costs	3.47	Medium
6. Educational infrastructure	3.53	High
7. Educational facilities	3.40	Medium
Total average	3.55	High

4.1.7. Readiness regarding Criterion 6: Educational Aspect

Table 9 shows that the seventeen readiness indicators in the educational aspect are in the range of 3.53–4.07. This means that this aspect is at level four on the rating scale (3.50–4.49). Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the sixth criterion is high.

Table 4. Readiness in the educational aspect.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. The existence of policies and implementation of education	4.07	High
2. Study program curriculum development policy	3.87	High
3. Faculty support for study program curriculum development	4.00	High
4. Study program curriculum document	3.93	High
5. Conformity between learning and the semester learning plan and fulfillment of good learning characteristics	3.87	High
6. Integration of research results and/or community service in learning	3.87	High
7. Learning activity monitoring system	3.73	High
8. Learning assessment	3.93	High
9. Microlearning	3.87	High
10. Academic guidance	3.87	High
11. Educational internship guidance	3.40	High
12. Final project/Thesis guidance	4.00	High
13. Academic atmosphere: Activities outside the classroom that support students' academic competence	3.73	High
14. Academic atmosphere: presence of guest lecturers and experts	3.53	High
15. Student satisfaction with lecturers' teaching performance	3.87	High
16. Student satisfaction with academic administration services	3.60	High
17. Satisfaction with learning infrastructure and facilities	3.60	High
Total average	3.81	High

4.1.8. Readiness regarding Criterion 7: Research Aspect

Table 10 shows that the four readiness indicators in the research aspect fall into two rating scales, namely level three in the 2.50–3.49 range and level four in the 3.50–4.49 range. Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the seventh criterion is medium for one indicator and high for the other three.

Table 5. Readiness in the research aspect.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Existence of policies and implementation of research	3.73	High
2. Research group and research roadmap	3.40	Medium
3. Lecturer research productivity	3.80	High
4. Involvement of students in research by permanent lecturers in the study program	3.80	High
Total average	3.68	High

4.1.9. Readiness regarding Criterion 8: Community Service Aspect

Table 11 shows that the three readiness indicators in the aspect of community service fall into two rating scales, namely level three in the 2.50–3.49 range and level four in the 3.50–4.49 range. Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the eighth criterion is medium for one indicator and high for two indicators.

Table 6. Readiness in the community service aspect.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Existence of policies and implementation of community service	3.47	Medium
2. Community service productivity	3.60	High
3. Involvement of students in the community service activities of permanent lecturers in the study program	3.80	High
Total average	3.62	High

4.1.10. Readiness regarding Criterion 9: Three Pillars of Higher Education Output and Achievement Aspects

Table 12 shows that the fourteen indicators of readiness in the three pillars of higher education output and achievement aspects are in two conditions. This means that this aspect is divided into two ranking scales at level three in the 2.50–3.49 range and level four in the 3.50–4.49 range. Thus, the readiness of the accreditation management regarding the ninth criterion is medium for six indicators and high for eight indicators.

Table 7. Readiness in the three pillars of higher education output and achievement aspects.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. The existence of policies on the outputs and achievements of the Three pillars of higher education	3.73	High
2. Grade point average (GPA) of graduates	3.87	High
3. Student academic and non-academic achievements	3.73	High
4. Average study time	3.60	High
5. On-time graduation	3.40	Medium
6. Student study success	3.53	High
7. Implementation of graduate tracking	3.13	Medium
8. Waiting time to obtain the first job	3.53	High
9. Relevance between work to and educational background	3.47	Medium
10. Graduate user satisfaction	3.67	High
11. Publication of research and community service results by permanent lecturers in the program study and students	3.73	High
12. Cited scientific works of permanent lecturers in the program study and students	3.33	Medium
13. Products or services of permanent lecturers in the program study and students that are adopted by the community	2.87	Medium
14. Products or services of permanent lecturers in the program study and students that have intellectual property rights or patents	3.07	Medium
Total average	3.48	Medium

4.1.11. Effort, Care, and Accreditation Ranking

Table 13 shows that the level of effort of the accreditation team to obtain the excellent accreditation rating is at level four with a mean value of 4.20, and the level of care to be fully involved in achieving excellent accreditation is at the highest level with a mean value of 4.60. Meanwhile, the accreditation results were achieved with a mean score of 3.80 or high achievement.

Table 8. Effort, care, and accreditation ranking.

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Hard work in obtaining the excellent accreditation rank (Effort)	4.20	High
Full involvement in achieving the excellent accreditation (Care)	4.60	Very high
Study program accreditation ranking achievements	3.80	High

4.1.12. The Relationship between Effort, Care, and Accreditation Achievement

Based on Table 14, it can be identified that effort has a correlation with care with a sig. value of 0.015. The direction of the relationship is positive with a Corr. value of 0.610, which means the level of the relationship is medium. However, effort does not correlate with accreditation achievement, which is proven by obtaining a sig. value of 0.749. Care also does not correlate with accreditation achievements, as evidenced by the sig. score of 0.852.

Table 9. The relationship between effort, care, and accreditation achievement.

Kendall's Tau-b analysis		Effort	Care	Accreditation achievement
Effort	Corr.	1.000	0.610*	–0.082
	Sig.		0.015	0.749
Care	Corr.	0.610*	1.000	0.049
	Sig.	0.015		0.852
Accreditation achievement	Corr.	–0.082	0.049	1.000
	Sig.	0.749	0.852	

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.2. Qualitative Findings

The results of the data processing from the questionnaires produced four important themes as part of the interpretation of the quantitative findings. These four themes are closely related to efforts to build a quality campus culture in the context of accreditation. The four themes in question are as follows:

4.2.1. Leadership Commitment

Leadership commitment plays a central role in the higher education accreditation process (Avolio & Benzaquen, 2020; Lozano et al., 2015). A strong and committed campus leader can bring about significant change and direct the entire university toward continuous quality improvement (Dzimińska, Fijałkowska, & Sułkowski, 2018). At one of the faculties that participated in this research, leadership commitment still needs to be optimized. This is supported by the following statements:

"Affirmative action is needed from leaders starting from the rectorate level to unit levels within the university." (Participant 12).

"Strong commitment is required from the faculty leaders and all elements of the faculty to support all study program efforts to achieve the excellent rank, especially the related documents required for study program accreditation." (Participant 18).

"There needs to be risk management and commitment from leaders, lecturers, and staff in supporting accreditation." (Participant 21).

"There needs to be commitment and good cooperation between leaders and lecturers in developing study programs." (Participant 22).

Building a culture of quality in the context of campus accreditation is a process that involves commitment, active participation, and collective awareness of all university components, including leaders, lecturers, staff, and students (Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). In the context of leadership, university leaders need to show a strong commitment to improving the quality of education and academic processes. They must lead by example in prioritizing accreditation as an integral part of the university's vision and mission. With strong leadership commitment, a university can move its entire community toward achieving high standards of quality and excellence.

4.2.2. Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are very important in the higher education accreditation process (Kai, 2009; Lozano et al., 2015). They ensure that the evaluation and assessment process is carried out honestly, fairly, and openly. Universities must be transparent in providing information about their academic programs, policies and procedures to the wider community, including providing information about the quality standards implemented and the steps taken to meet those standards (Pattaro, Moura e Sá, & de Kruijf, 2022). The efforts made to realize transparency and accountability in the field in this research did not appear to be optimal. This was stated by several participants as follows:

"The internalization and socialization of the vision and mission is still not good enough." (Participant 8).

"The role of faculty quality assurance in preparing for accreditation is not optimal." (Participant 12)

"The internalization and socialization of the vision and mission is still not good enough." (Participant 7).

"The research and community service reporting system in the study program is not yet clear." (Participant 19).

"There is no clear roadmap regarding research." (Participant 21).

In addition, the accreditation process requires collecting data and evidence that supports the achievement of quality standards. Transparency also involves the active participation of stakeholders, including students, lecturers, staff, alumni, and other external parties in the accreditation process (Avolio & Benzaquen, 2020; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). Universities must open lines of communication and be open to feedback and contributions from all relevant parties. The importance of having open lines of communication was stated by several participants.

"Evaluation of curriculum implementation (and) thesis guidance satisfaction surveys are not yet available." (Participant 13).

"The research satisfaction survey is not available." (Participant 15).

"Satisfaction surveys with collaboration partners have never been conducted." (Participant 16).

The importance of conducting satisfaction surveys as feedback in the higher education accreditation process is significant (Welsh & Dey, 2002). Satisfaction surveys are a powerful tool for gathering direct information from various stakeholders, such as students, faculty, staff, and alumni, about their experiences with the university.

4.2.3. Awareness of Quality Standards

Awareness of quality standards is an important foundation in the higher education accreditation process (Pham, 2018). It involves a deep understanding and acceptance by all members of the academic community of the standards necessary to ensure high quality education (Kai, 2009; Welsh & Dey, 2002). The understanding and acceptance of the concepts and standards in accreditation are reflected in the following participant statements:

"Accreditation is a form of quality assurance; the better the quality, the higher the public's trust." (Participant 19).

"Excellent study programs are really needed for campus development and student competitiveness in the world of work." (Participant 11).

"Accreditation ranking will have a direct impact on increasing graduate input and output." (Participant 12).

"To progress and maintain the quality of the study program, the study program must improve in terms of its accreditation." (Participant 7).

Regarding understanding the required standards, the research participants were also aware of several weaknesses of the standards set in the accreditation. This was stated by several participants. Several examples of representative statements in sequence from standards 1 to 9 are as follows:

1. "The vision, mission, goals, and strategies have not been prepared using appropriate procedures, including their ratification in accordance with accreditation standards." (Participant 13).

2. "Cooperation in study programs is still lacking if the aim is to achieve the excellent accreditation." (Participant 6).

3. "The weakness in criterion 3 lies in the lack of student achievement at national and international levels." (Participant 11).

4. "There is still a lack of associate professors and study program lecturers who have doctoral qualifications."(Participant 3).

5. "Educational facilities that do not meet standards are a weakness for the success of achieving the targets for each study program. Moreover, the inadequate financial strengthening of the community service is an obstacle for all existing elements."(Participant 16).

6. "Evaluation of curriculum implementation (and) thesis guidance satisfaction surveys are not yet available." (Participant 13).

7. "Lecturers' achievements in research and publications are not balanced even though the average is high." (Participant 11).

8. "The average dedication of lecturers is still not sufficient to meet excellent accreditation standards." (Participant 6).

9. "The lack of students' published scientific work weakens online citations." (Participant 16).

Awareness of quality standards must be accompanied by an understanding of the importance of complying with these standards (Pham, 2018). This includes understanding the consequences of not adhering to the standards, both in the context of accreditation and in providing quality education to students. The awareness of quality standards must also include recognition that quality improvement is a continuous process (Hobson et al., 2008). This means that higher education institutions are always seeking to improve practices and processes to achieve higher standards over time. By developing awareness of quality standards throughout the academic community, higher education institutions can ensure that they have a strong foundation to meet accreditation requirements and provide a quality education to their students.

4.2.4. Sustainable Quality Development

Sustainable quality development in the context of higher education accreditation is an approach that integrates efforts to continuously improve the quality of education, not only as a response to accreditation requirements, but also as part of the university's culture and commitment to educational excellence (Dzimińska et al., 2018; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023). Universities need to continue to encourage the professional development of lecturers (Julia, Supriyadi, Ali, Agustian, & Fadlilah, 2023; Julia, Supriyadi, & Iswara, 2020), staff, curriculum

improvements, and relevant research to ensure the maintenance of high-quality standards (Hobson et al., 2008; Pattaro et al., 2022).

To develop a culture of sustainable quality, higher education institutions must have a strong commitment to continuous improvement, with the understanding that the quality of education is not static and needs to be improved continuously (Participant 9). It requires the participation of all parties by involving all stakeholders, including lecturers, staff, students, and alumni, in the quality development process (Participant 13). Active participation from all parties can strengthen collective commitment to continuous improvement. Universities must also provide support and incentives for the development of innovative ideas that can improve the quality of education. This is necessary in encouraging a culture of innovation across the university to stimulate new ideas and best practices in education. However, this is quite difficult in reality, as stated by the following participants:

"Lecturers are productive, but the budget does not support their productivity." (Participant 18).

"Regarding the funding for the three pillars of higher education, many lecturers use independent funding and have minimal funding from other parties." (Participant 13).

Therefore, accreditation is not only about fulfilling administrative requirements but is also an in-depth effort to develop educational quality (Hou et al., 2015). Accreditation plays an important role in encouraging universities to continuously improve the quality of their education and ensure that they provide quality educational services to their students (Avolio & Benzaquen, 2020).

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the research results, there are a number of key findings that are important to discuss further. First, of all nine accreditation assessment criteria, there is no total average score that reached 4.50 (very high). A total of eight criteria obtained an average value in the 3.50–4.49 range (high), and one criterion obtained an average value in the 2.50–3.49 range (medium). This is why they could not achieve an excellent accreditation rank, as the requirement to achieve the excellent accreditation rank is to obtain a minimum score of 4.50 for all criteria. The qualitative findings also confirmed that many aspects have not been maximized in accreditation management, including aspects of transparency and accountability in university management. Transparency and accountability play a crucial role in building high-quality accreditation (Mula-Falcón & Caballero, 2023; Pattaro et al., 2022).

Second, the performance and care of the accreditation team had not reached the highest level. The findings showed that there was a positive relationship between effort and care. However, the level of the relationship was only 'medium', so it did not have a significant impact on achieving excellence. In fact, effort and concern did not correlate with achieving accreditation. This means that even though the accreditation team made great efforts and had great care for the accreditation process, the accreditation results showed that their effort and concern had not reached the perfect level. In other words, effort and concern are needed at a different or higher level in order to achieve an excellent accreditation rating. The qualitative findings also confirmed that a strong commitment is needed from the entire academic community to build active participation focused on achieving excellent accreditation. In fact, an excellent example from leaders is needed to realize the university's vision and mission, because a leader's example will be followed by their subordinates to change and realize the university's achievement target (Bravo et al., 2022; Dzimińska et al., 2018).

The third finding is the lack of an orderly and standardized work culture. The results showed that the participating universities did not yet have an ISO certificate at either the university or faculty levels. Meanwhile, ISO certification can be proof that the university carries out business processes with good management, quality and standards. The accreditation team was not able to reach the highest level in managing accreditation. A university that has received ISO certification has a better work culture compared to universities that do not have ISO certification. Supposedly, on the basis of an ISO-certified work culture, it could give rise to other efforts to create quality performance and work results, and the quality is maintained. This habit then brings the accreditation team

to a higher level of performance. The qualitative findings also confirmed that it is necessary to develop a sustainable culture of quality and best practices in the implementation of education as a whole. It is through cultivating quality that universities can create an environment that maintains quality and professionalism (Chiadphrommarat, 2018; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

Referring to the research objectives and key findings, it can be concluded that to achieve the excellent accreditation rank in Indonesia, it is necessary to achieve nine accreditation criteria with an average score above 4.50 (very high). Achieving a very high rank can only be done if the entire academic community, such as lecturers, staff, and students, consistently carry out academic activities by always implementing a quality culture. Leaders need to be serious about ensuring the optimal function of campus facilities, setting an example by creating an innovative and productive campus environment and managing study programs with high quality standards. Likewise, the accreditation team is required to achieve the highest level of performance to achieve the excellent accreditation rank, which includes effort, care, active participation, and developing a quality culture on an ongoing basis. Based on the findings, H1 was accepted because achieving an excellent accreditation rating was greatly influenced by the level of readiness of the accreditation team. Meanwhile, H2 was rejected because the effort and concern had no relationship with achieving an excellent accreditation rating.

7. IMPLICATIONS

This research underscores the challenge of attaining an excellent accreditation rating and suggests several policy recommendations to enhance accreditation rankings: 1) mandate universities to promptly pursue ISO certification, 2) provide training and mentoring for accreditation teams to optimize their performance, 3) allocate resources for additional lecture facilities, 4) enhance the performance of the tri dharma (teaching, research, and community service) of higher education institutions, and 5) enhance transparency and accountability in the management of study programs and faculties.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 presents the questionnaire, and Appendix 2 presents the interview questions used.

1. Questionnaire

Readiness in criterion 1: Vision, mission, goals, and strategy aspects

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. The existence of policies and implementation of the faculty's VMGS preparation					
2. Conformity of the scientific vision and objectives of the study program with the faculty's VMGS					
3. Realistic scientific vision and objectives of the study program					
4. Clarity of strategy and stages in achieving the scientific vision and objectives of the study program					
5. Level of understanding of the scientific vision and objectives of the study program					

Readiness in criterion 2: Governance system, governance policy, and cooperation aspects

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. Existence of policies and implementation of governance system, governance policy, leadership, cooperation, and quality assurance in the faculty					
2. Faculty governance system					
3. Faculty governance policy					
4. Faculty leadership					
5. Cooperation policies and implementation					
6. Scope of cooperation					

Readiness in criterion 3: Student aspect

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. Existence of policies and implementation of student affairs programs					
2. Recruitment of prospective students					
3. Interest/Aptitude test in the field of education and becoming a prospective educator					
4. Student service system in the learning process					
5. Quality of student input					
6. Appeals of the study program					
7. Student origin profile					

Readiness in criterion 4: Human resources aspect

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. The existence of policies and implementation of lecturers and educational staff in the faculty					
2. Recruitment of permanent lecturers in the study program					
3. Academic qualifications of permanent lecturers in the study program					
4. Academic position of permanent lecturers in the study program					
5. Ratio of lecturers: Students					
6. Teaching attendance of permanent lecturers in the study program					
7. Number of students guided for the final project/thesis					
8. Achievements of permanent lecturers in the study program					
9. Competence and carrier development of permanent lecturers in the study program through sustainable professional activities					
10. Educational staff recruitment					
11. Educational staff profile					
12. Competence and carrier development of educational staff					
13. Implementation of monitoring policies					
14. Rewards, sanctions, and termination of employment for lecturers and educational staff					
15. Satisfaction survey mechanism, satisfaction level					
16. Feedback from lecturers and educational staff regarding HR management					

Readiness in criterion 5: Financial, facilities, and infrastructure aspects

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. Existence of policies and implementation of finance, facilities, and infrastructure					
2. Education operational costs					
3. Research operational costs					
4. Community service operational costs					
5. Publication operational costs					
6. Educational infrastructure					
7. Educational facilities					

Readiness in criterion 6: Educational aspect

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. The existence of policies and implementation of education					
2. Study program curriculum development policy					
3. Faculty support for study program curriculum development					
4. Study program curriculum document					
5. Conformity between learning and the semester learning plan and fulfillment of good learning characteristics					
6. Integration of research results and/or community service in learning					
7. Learning activity monitoring system					
8. Learning assessment					
9. Microlearning					
10. Academic guidance					
11. Educational internship guidance					
12. Final project/Thesis guidance					
13. Academic atmosphere: activities outside the classroom that support students' academic competence					
14. Academic atmosphere: presence of guest lecturers and experts					
15. Student satisfaction with lecturers' teaching performance					
16. Student satisfaction with academic administration services					
17. Satisfaction with learning infrastructure and facilities					

Readiness in criterion 7: Research aspect

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. Existence of policies and implementation of research					
2. Research group and research roadmap					
3. Lecturer research productivity					
4. Involvement of students in research by permanent lecturers in the study program					

Readiness in criterion 8: Community service aspect

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. Existence of policies and implementation of community service					
2. Community service productivity					
3. Involvement of students in the community service activities of permanent lecturers in the study program					

Readiness in criterion 9: Three pillars of higher education output and achievement aspects

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. The existence of policies on the outputs and achievements of the three pillars of higher education					
2. Grade point average (GPA) of graduates					
3. Student academic and non-academic achievements					
4. Average study time					
5. On-time graduation					
6. Student study success					
7. Implementation of graduate tracking					
8. Waiting time to obtain the first job					
9. Relevance between work to and educational background					
10. Graduate user satisfaction					
11. Publication of research and community service results by permanent lecturers in the program study and students					

12. Cited scientific works of permanent lecturers in the program study and students					
13. Products or services of permanent lecturers in the program study and students that are adopted by the community					
14. Products or services of permanent lecturers in the program study and students that have Intellectual Property Rights or patents					

Effort, care, and accreditation ranking

Indicator	Very poor	Poor	Rather poor	Good	Very good
1. Hard work in obtaining the excellent accreditation rank (effort)					
2. Full involvement in achieving the excellent accreditation (care)					
3. Study program accreditation ranking achievements					

2. Interview

Questions
1. What is the current accreditation rating of your study program?
2. Please explain why your study program achieved that rank?
3. What is your effort in achieving excellent accreditation?
4. Why do you care about achieving excellent accreditation?
5. How is the university level quality assurance system implemented?
6. How is the faculty level quality assurance system implemented?
7. How is the study program level quality assurance system implemented?
8. How is ISO certification implemented?
9. Please provide an explanation of the condition of the overall quality assurance system.
10. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving maximum scores on criteria 1 of the accreditation.
11. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving maximum scores on criteria 2 of the accreditation.
12. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving maximum scores on criteria 3 of the accreditation.
13. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving maximum scores on criteria 4 of the accreditation.
14. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving the maximum score in criterion 5 of the accreditation.
15. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving the maximum score on criterion 6 of the accreditation.
16. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving the maximum score on criterion 7 of the accreditation.
17. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving maximum scores on criterion 8 of the accreditation.
18. Please explain what the weaknesses of your study program are in achieving maximum scores on criteria 9 of the accreditation.