ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC SERVICES AT THE BARUGA SUBDISTRICT OFFICE, KENDARI CITY

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ABSTRACT

Public service is a crucial indicator for assessing local government performance and community satisfaction. This study aims to analyze strategies for improving public services at the Baruga Subdistrict Office, Kendari City, focusing on service quality from the perspective of the community and the influencing factors. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Informants include the Head of the Subdistrict, service staff, and community service users, selected using purposive sampling until data saturation was reached. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the quality of public services at the Baruga Subdistrict Office is generally good, particularly in the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, competence, credibility, and security. However, several aspects require improvement, including facility comfort, staff proficiency in using supporting tools, and friendliness in service interactions. Recommended strategies for service improvement include employee training, facility enhancement, strengthening standard operating procedures, and fostering empathetic and professional attitudes. These findings emphasize the importance of employee competence, facility quality, and interactions with the community as key factors in enhancing public satisfaction.
Keywords: Public Service, Improvement Strategy, Service Quality.

INTRODUCTION

Public service is one of the core functions of government, aiming to meet the basic needs of society in terms of goods, services, and administrative procedures. High-quality public service not only serves as an indicator of effective governance but also reflects the government's commitment to providing services that are fast, accessible, affordable, and measurable. According to Ratminto and Atik Septi Winarsih (2007), public service encompasses all forms of services provided by government institutions to fulfill community needs in accordance with their legal authority. This view is reinforced by Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, which states that public service is a series of activities aimed at fulfilling citizens' needs for goods, services, and/or administrative procedures provided by public service institutions.

Service quality is a crucial aspect in assessing the effectiveness of public institutions. Tjiptono (2007) explains that service quality is a dynamic condition that affects the ability of service providers to meet user expectations. The assessment of service quality is strongly influenced by user perceptions, rather than solely internal standards set by providers. Services are considered high-quality when they meet or exceed public expectations, for example, in terms of timeliness, responsiveness, employee competence, and adequacy of facilities. Conversely, services are deemed inadequate when they fail to meet public expectations.

In the era of governmental modernization, citizens increasingly demand faster, more transparent, and digitally integrated public services. Digitalization of services, electronic queuing systems, and online access to information have become new requirements for sub-district offices to improve efficiency and citizen satisfaction. This trend requires local governments not only to rely on manual procedures but also to implement innovative strategies in service management.

Theoretically, the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry is one of the most widely used approaches to measure public service quality. It consists of five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions are commonly adopted in contemporary studies to evaluate public service performance in various government institutions. In addition, the principles of good governance and the excellent service theory provide a strong foundation for improving public service quality, emphasizing accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and fairness.

Despite ongoing bureaucratic reforms, empirical evidence shows that public service quality in Indonesia still faces numerous challenges. Data from the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia indicates that the national average compliance with public service standards remains below 30%, reflecting weak implementation in many government agencies. Common issues include uncertainty in service timelines, insufficient employee competence, unprofessional behavior, and inadequate supporting facilities.

A similar situation occurs at the Baruga Village Office in Kendari City. Preliminary observations reveal several weaknesses in public service delivery. The limited number of employees requires one staff member to manage two service counters simultaneously, resulting in long queues and extended waiting times. Employees often demonstrate low responsiveness, lack friendliness, and possess limited understanding of service procedures. Supporting facilities, such as document archives, are poorly organized, slowing administrative processes. With only 14 employees distributed across four divisions, the workload significantly exceeds the number of service users, negatively affecting service quality.

Human resource (HR) management perspectives emphasize that employee competence directly influences service outcomes. Robbins and Judge (2020) assert that competence is determined by ability, motivation, knowledge, and positive work attitudes. For civil servants, enhancing competence through education, training, and supervision is essential to achieve professional performance.

Various studies support these views. Sari and Widodo (2020) found that public service quality is significantly influenced by employee competence, discipline, and facility adequacy. Rahmawati and Hakim (2021) highlighted the importance of employee behavior—such as friendliness, punctuality, and communication skills—in shaping citizen satisfaction. Mulyani and Setiyawan (2022) reported that low service quality in village offices is often caused by insufficient staffing, poor archive

management, and limited understanding of minimum service standards. Similarly, Apriani and Kurniawan (2021) and Wicaksono and Puteri (2023) emphasized that organizational commitment to strengthening employee competence through training, performance evaluation, and proper motivation is crucial for achieving quality public service.

In addition to internal factors, external challenges—such as rising citizen expectations, demands for transparency, and competition among sub-districts in service quality—also drive the need for innovative public service strategies. Therefore, a systematic strategic approach is needed to identify priority areas for improvement, leverage technology, optimize human resources, and enhance supporting facilities.

Based on these findings, the service problems at the Baruga Village Office indicate the necessity for a comprehensive strategy to improve service quality, employee competence, and facility readiness. This research is particularly important because the village office represents the closest government unit to citizens and plays a central role in fulfilling basic administrative needs.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze strategies for improving public services at the Baruga Village Office in Kendari City, focusing on efforts to enhance service quality, strengthen employee competence, and improve the effectiveness of supporting facilities. The results are expected to provide guidance for the village government in formulating strategic policies for more excellent, responsive, and innovative public service.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the research questions and objectives, this study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach. This approach is selected to gain an in-depth understanding of strategies for improving public services, operational activities, employee behaviors, interactions between staff and the community, and factors influencing service quality at the Baruga Village Office, Kendari City. According to Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2005:4), qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviors. Descriptive qualitative research aims to describe, explain, and provide a detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study by examining individuals, groups, or events as comprehensively as possible. In this study, humans serve as research instruments, and the results are presented in narratives or statements reflecting actual conditions in the field.

The research was conducted at the Baruga Village Office, Kendari City, due to the suboptimal level of public service improvement at this office. Informants include the Head of the General Section, service staff, and five community members who have used village services. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached, meaning that the information obtained was sufficient and representative. The purposive sampling technique was used, selecting informants based on the researcher's judgment regarding who is most capable of providing accurate and relevant information according to the research objectives.

Data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through interviews with informants and observation of public service implementation, while secondary data consisted of supporting documents such as interview transcripts, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), organizational structure, employee data, and documentation related to public service strategies at the Baruga Village Office. Data collection techniques included

observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted participatively to examine the service delivery process, employee-community interactions, facility comfort, employee discipline, speed and accuracy of services, and use of available tools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information on strategies for improving public service and eight key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, competence, credibility, and security. Documentation involved collecting and analyzing supporting materials, such as photographs of service areas, the Public Service Standards book, Mayor regulations, organizational structure, employee data, and the profile of the Baruga Village Office.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation compared information from different parties, such as employees and community members. Technique triangulation verified data using different methods on the same source, for example, comparing interviews with observations and documentation. Time triangulation checked data consistency at different points in time to capture any changes that occurred.

Data analysis employed an interactive analysis model, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction involved summarizing, selecting, and organizing important information so that conclusions could be systematically drawn. Data presentation was carried out in the form of narratives, tables, and diagrams to identify meaningful patterns. Conclusions were drawn based on field analysis and supporting documents, considering cause-and-effect relationships and proportionality of the information obtained.

The operational definitions of variables in this study are aligned with the focus on public service improvement strategies. Public service quality was measured through the tangibles dimension (employee appearance, service area comfort, ease of process, discipline, and use of tools), reliability (accuracy, service standards, proficiency in using tools), responsiveness (employee responsiveness and timeliness), assurance (certainty of time and cost), empathy (polite, courteous, and non-discriminatory behavior), competence (guidance, knowledge, and skills of employees), credibility (honesty in building community trust), and security (ensuring services are free from harm or risk). In addition, the study emphasizes the identification of strategies, innovations, and best practices that can be applied to enhance public service quality at the Baruga Village Office.

Thus, this research method is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of strategies for improving public services, the factors influencing them, and potential improvements that can be implemented to increase community satisfaction.

Result and Discussion
Result

The quality of public services at the Baruga Subdistrict Office in Kendari City can be analyzed through eight key dimensions, which reflect the current service conditions and potential strategies for improvement. The tangible dimension relates to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, staff, and communication media. Employees maintain a neat appearance and wear uniforms in accordance with local government regulations, positively influencing public perceptions of service quality. Service facilities, such as seating and fans, are available; however, some areas still lack air conditioning, reducing comfort during peak hours. The service process is

relatively straightforward, as staff provide clear guidance on administrative requirements, although some users face difficulties due to insufficient prior information. Employee discipline is evident in adherence to working hours and orderly queuing procedures, while the use of tools such as computers and printers supports efficient service delivery, although some staff still need to improve their technical skills.

The reliability dimension reflects the ability of the service unit to provide consistent, accurate, and standardized services. Employees work carefully to minimize errors, but some service standards are not clearly visible to the public, and staff expertise in using tools varies, which affects service speed, especially when staffing levels are limited. The responsiveness dimension illustrates the attitude and readiness of staff to provide timely services according to user needs. Staff generally respond well, call users in order, and inquire about service requirements, but limited personnel can reduce service speed. Suggestion boxes are utilized to collect complaints, which are then addressed to improve service quality.

The assurance dimension encompasses staff knowledge, skills, politeness, and service reliability. Employees provide time guarantees and proof of service completion, while most services are free of charge, enhancing public confidence. The empathy dimension relates to staff's ability to build relationships, communicate effectively, and understand public needs. Staff prioritize users' interests, maintain politeness and friendliness, and provide services without discrimination, although minor delays can occur due to personal matters. The competence dimension emphasizes employees' knowledge and skills in performing public service tasks. Staff possess adequate competence and execute duties professionally, ensuring that services align with user needs and public service standards.

The credibility dimension involves honesty and integrity in building public trust. Employees maintain honesty in providing information and services, ensuring users receive accurate guidance and transparent processes. The security dimension ensures services are delivered safely without risk to users. Services at the Baruga Subdistrict Office are secure, with minimal risk of harm and effective procedural oversight, giving users a sense of safety and confidence.

Overall, public service quality at the Baruga Subdistrict Office is generally satisfactory, with the eight dimensions collectively contributing to positive public perceptions. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for improvement, including enhancing staff proficiency with service tools and technology, displaying service standards clearly for the public, improving facility comfort such as air conditioning and seating, and increasing staff availability or optimizing work schedules during peak hours to improve service speed. Implementing strategies focused on these eight dimensions is expected to significantly increase community satisfaction and the effectiveness of public services at the Baruga Subdistrict Office.

Discussion

Public service quality reflects the ability of service providers to meet the needs and expectations of the community through various aspects, including processes, human resources, facilities, and interactions with service users. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), service quality can be measured through five main dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, each contributing to the public's perception of services received. In the context of Baruga Subdistrict Office, public service quality is generally well-implemented;

however, there are still areas that require strategic improvement, particularly concerning physical comfort, employee reliability, and friendliness in service delivery.

The tangible dimension in this study includes employee appearance, service area comfort, ease of service process, employee discipline, and utilization of supporting tools. Findings indicate that while employee appearance and physical facilities are adequate, the comfort of service areas remains a concern due to the absence of air conditioning and scattered documents on service desks. This observation aligns with Wibowo and Mursyidah (2022), who noted that physical comfort significantly affects public perception of service quality. Similarly, Rustini and Khozin (2024) emphasized that adequate facilities enhance user satisfaction, especially in high-traffic public service settings. Strategically, improving tangible aspects can involve upgrading facility infrastructure, reorganizing service areas, and ensuring all employees maintain consistent professional appearance.

The reliability dimension reflects employees' ability to deliver services accurately, promptly, and dependably. Baruga Subdistrict employees are generally careful and adhere to service standards; however, variations in proficiency using supporting tools, such as computers, can reduce operational efficiency. This finding supports Umaroh and Sukmana (2022), who reported that limited employee competence in technology impacts service reliability. To improve reliability, strategies such as targeted training programs, standardization of procedures, and periodic performance evaluations are recommended to ensure consistent, error-free service delivery.

The responsiveness dimension evaluates employees' willingness to provide fast, precise, and accurate services. The study found that staff generally respond well to community requests and handle complaints promptly, which reinforces trust and satisfaction. This is consistent with Setyaningsih, Barusman, and Barusman (2024), who emphasized that employee responsiveness is a critical factor in enhancing public satisfaction. Strategies to further strengthen responsiveness could include optimizing staffing schedules during peak service hours, establishing clear communication channels for feedback, and implementing monitoring systems to ensure timely service.

Assurance relates to employees' ability to instill confidence through knowledge, courtesy, and reliability. At Baruga Subdistrict, employees provide guarantees regarding service time and costs, giving the community confidence in the service process. These findings align with Widianto and Zunaidi (2024), who found that assurance significantly affects public satisfaction, and Robbins and Judge (2019), who highlighted that competence and credibility are key to building trust. Strategies to enhance assurance include continuous professional development, clear communication of service guarantees, and the provision of proof of service completion.

Empathy focuses on individualized attention and consideration of community needs. Employees generally maintain politeness and seek to understand user needs; however, some instances of inattentiveness or unfriendly behavior were observed. This echoes Rustini and Khozin (2024), who noted that empathy strongly influences satisfaction and loyalty. Strategic interventions to improve empathy may include customer service training, mentoring programs, and promoting a culture of attentiveness and courtesy in all interactions.

In addition to the traditional SERVQUAL dimensions, this study evaluated competence, credibility, and security. Employee competence ensures the proper execution of service tasks, facilitating smooth service delivery. Credibility, particularly honesty and transparency in interactions, plays a vital role in building public trust, consistent with Wibowo and Mursyidah (2022). Security reflects the provision of safe

services without risk or pressure, which is crucial in fostering user confidence, as highlighted by Setyaningsih et al. (2024). Strategies to enhance these dimensions include structured training, integrity monitoring, risk management protocols, and clear communication of safety measures.

Overall, public service quality at the Baruga Subdistrict Office is generally good, particularly regarding tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, competence, credibility, and security. However, challenges remain in physical comfort, employee reliability, and empathy. To address these issues, strategic improvements should focus on staff training, optimal utilization of technology, strengthening standard operating procedures, and promoting friendly and attentive interactions with the community. These strategies not only align with SERVQUAL theory but also reinforce previous research (Wibowo & Mursyidah, 2022; Umaroh & Sukmana, 2022; Rustini & Khozin, 2024; Setyaningsih et al., 2024; Widianto & Zunaidi, 2024) indicating that public service quality is strongly influenced by employee competence, facility adequacy, and the quality of interactions with service users.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the overall quality of public services at the Baruga Subdistrict Office, Kendari City, is generally good. The community perceives that services have been delivered in accordance with established standards, particularly across the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, competence, credibility, and security. Employees demonstrate competence, maintain service reliability, provide clear guidance, and carry out tasks professionally, contributing positively to community satisfaction.

However, several aspects still require strategic improvement. Physical comfort in service areas, employee proficiency in operating supporting tools, and friendliness in interactions with service users are areas that influence the perceived quality of services. Addressing these issues through targeted strategies—such as staff training, upgrading facilities, implementing standard operating procedures, and fostering empathetic and professional behavior—can further enhance public satisfaction and service effectiveness.

This study reinforces the SERVQUAL framework proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) and aligns with recent findings (Wibowo & Mursyidah, 2022; Umaroh & Sukmana, 2022; Rustini & Khozin, 2024; Setyaningsih et al., 2024; Widianto & Zunaidi, 2024), which highlight that public service quality is strongly influenced by employee competence, facility adequacy, responsiveness, and quality interactions with service users. Implementing strategic improvements based on these dimensions is crucial for enhancing the performance of the Baruga Subdistrict Office and increasing community satisfaction with public services.

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