



Public Perception of Public Services at the Religious Affairs Office of South Dumai District

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Abstract. Marriage administration services are a form of public service that has important legal and social implications for the community. The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), as a technical implementing unit of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, plays a strategic role in providing legal certainty regarding marital status. This study aims to analyze the quality of public services and public perceptions of marriage administration services at the Office of Religious Affairs in South Dumai District. This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies, with purposively selected informants consisting of KUA officers and community service users. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the quality of public services at the KUA in South Dumai District is generally in the good category, particularly in the dimensions of responsiveness, reliability, and assurance. However, the tangible and empathy dimensions still require improvement, particularly related to limited infrastructure and individual attention to the community. This study confirms that the effectiveness of marriage administration services is determined not only by the performance of the apparatus, but also by the level of understanding and readiness of the community as service users. These findings provide important implications for improving the quality of public services through strengthening socialization, procedural transparency, and a more user-oriented service approach.

Keywords: Marriage Administration; Office of Religious Affairs; Public Perception; Public Services; Service Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

Journal of Future Artificial Intelligence and Technologies accepts research paper submissions that contain at least 4000 to 8000 words or around 8 to 20 pages for research articles and a maximum of 30 pages for review articles. The introduction must be written briefly, concisely, and clearly. The introduction must contain an explanation of (1) the Research object, (2) Methods that have been used previously, (3) the Weaknesses and strengths of each method or may briefly allude to related work and/or hypotheses, (4) Research problems (5) Proposed solutions and/or approaches (6) List of Contributions (6) Rest of paper. The introduction section must be scientific and rich in citations. Use “maintext_FAITH” style for this paragraph.

Public service is a crucial indicator in assessing the performance of government institutions and the quality of state administration, particularly in services directly related to civil rights. One form of public service with significant legal and social implications is marriage administration services, implemented by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Marriage administration not only serves to fulfill bureaucratic procedures but also provides legal certainty regarding the marital status of individuals (Mardiasmo, 2018; Osborne, 2010). This process involves various

administrative stages and document requirements that require understanding and readiness from the public as service users.

Previous studies on marriage administration services at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) generally used a qualitative descriptive approach and a public service quality framework, such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Paulina, 2023; Adrian Tawai et al., 2022). This method has advantages in evaluating the institution's internal performance, compliance with standard operating procedures, and the professionalism of its staff. However, this approach has limitations because it tends to position the KUA as the sole determinant of service quality, while external factors, particularly public understanding and awareness, have not been explored in depth.

Conceptually, the effectiveness of public services is relational, that is, it depends on the interaction between service providers and service users (Dwiyanto, 2015). The public's low understanding of marriage administration procedures and weak awareness in completing requirements often lead to service delays, repeated administrative processes, and service inefficiencies, which ultimately reduce public satisfaction and the image of public institutions (Alm, 2019). Initial findings through observations and interviews at the South Dumai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) indicate the lack of a clearly displayed and easily accessible marriage administration service flow for the public, thus triggering confusion and administrative errors.

Based on these conditions, this research focuses on how public perception, understanding, and awareness influence the effectiveness of marriage administration services at the South Dumai District Office of Religious Affairs. This research proposes a user-centered approach that positions the public as a crucial subject in public service analysis, not merely as a recipient of services.

The main contributions of this research include: (1) providing empirical evidence regarding the role of public understanding and awareness in marriage administration services; (2) expanding the study of public services by integrating external factors of service users; and (3) developing practical recommendations to improve the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of marriage administration services at the sub-district level. The structure of this article consists of a literature review in the second part, research methodology in the third part, results and discussion in the fourth part, and conclusions and policy implications in the final part.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Analysis in Public Service Research

Analysis is a fundamental stage in scientific research that serves to deeply understand phenomena through the process of data analysis and interpretation. According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, analysis is the activity of breaking down a main problem into smaller parts to understand the relationships between its elements as a whole. In line with this, Komarudin states that analysis is a thinking activity that aims to separate a whole into components so that the characteristics and functions of each part can be clearly understood (Savira, 2022). In the context of qualitative research, Sugiyono emphasizes that data analysis aims to process data into meaningful information to answer the problem formulation and discover the meaning of the social phenomena being studied (Albina & Siregar, 2025). Thus, analysis in public service research functions not only as a data processing technique but also as a primary instrument for understanding the complexity of interactions between public institutions and society.

Service Concept and Its Characteristics

Service is generally understood as an activity aimed at fulfilling the needs of other parties through a specific interaction process. Lovelock defines service as an economic activity that produces benefits at a specific time and place, which are intangible and highly dependent on the experience of the service recipient (Sutopo, 2014). The characteristics of services that are intangible, heterogeneous, and inseparable from the service provider make service quality highly influenced by the role of human resources (Parasuraman in Saefulloh, 2018). Kotler (2002) emphasizes that service is an action or activity that does not result in ownership, but provides added value for service users (Karundeng et al., 2021). In administrative services, such as services at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), procedural aspects, clarity of information, and the attitude of the apparatus are key factors in creating public satisfaction.

Concept of the Public as Service Users

The public refers to a group of individuals who share a common interest and concern for a particular issue or service. Oemi Abdurrachman explains that the public is not always large-scale, but can be a small group involved in a common interest (Siregar, 2021). Herbert Blumer and James Grunig emphasize that the public is a group that is aware of a problem and is involved in the process of responding to that problem (Sutopo, 2014). In the context of public services, the public not only plays a role as a recipient of services, but also as an actor that influences the effectiveness of services through their level of understanding, awareness, and compliance with applicable procedures.

Public Services and Quality Measurement

Public service is defined as a series of activities carried out by the government to meet the needs of the community in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations (Sinambela in Rahardian, 2017). Law Number 25 of 2009 emphasizes that public service includes the provision of goods, services, and administrative services for all citizens. To measure the quality of public service, Zeithaml et al. proposed five main dimensions, namely tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Nursifa & Ekawati, 2024). This model is widely used in public service research because it is able to provide a comprehensive picture of the physical aspects, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy of the apparatus in providing services to the community.

Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) as a Public Service Institution

The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is a government institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs that functions as a technical implementation unit at the sub-district level. The KUA plays a strategic role in religious administration services, particularly marriage registration, which directly impacts legal certainty and civil rights (Nur, 2018; Siska et al., 2024). As a public service institution, the KUA is required to provide services that are transparent, easy to understand, and meet public service standards. However, various studies have shown that despite the relatively good quality of internal KUA services, obstacles remain, including limited facilities, lack of procedural socialization, and low public understanding (Paulina, 2023; Tawai et al., 2022).

Research Gap

Based on a literature review, most previous studies have focused on evaluating the internal performance of the KUA (Religious Affairs Office) and the quality of service provided by its officials. Research on external factors, particularly the perception, understanding, and awareness of the public as service users, is still relatively limited. However, the public's lack of understanding of marriage administration procedures is a crucial factor influencing service effectiveness. Therefore, this study fills this gap by focusing on public perceptions of public services at the KUA in South Dumai District. This is expected to provide a more comprehensive contribution to the development of public service studies in Indonesia.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Dumai Selatan District, Dumai City, located at Jalan Gunung Berapi, Bumi Ayu Village, Dumai Selatan District. The research location was selected based on the KUA's strategic role as a technical implementing unit of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in providing public services in the religious sector, particularly marriage services and other religious administration.

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of in-depth description of the implementation of public services and public perceptions of service quality at the South Dumai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). The research subjects were parties directly involved in the public service process at the KUA. Informants were determined using a purposive sampling technique, namely the deliberate selection of informants based on considerations of relevance and direct involvement in the service. The research informants consisted of one KUA service officer as the service provider and one member of the public as the service user, who were deemed capable of representing the perspectives of both the provider and recipient of public services.

The data used in this study consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of public service processes and in-depth interviews with research informants to gather information on service flows, service experiences, and challenges encountered. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained through documentation studies and literature reviews related to public services, the KUA institution, and relevant laws and regulations.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis process began with data reduction, namely the selection and focusing of data relevant to the research focus, such as service procedures, human resources, and supporting and inhibiting factors of public services. Next, the reduced data was presented in descriptive form so that the relationships between the data could be understood systematically. The final stage of analysis was drawing conclusions, which was carried out by interpreting patterns and field findings objectively to answer the research problem formulation regarding public services at the KUA of South Dumai District.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research on the quality of public services at the South Dumai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) shows that service delivery is influenced by five main indicators: tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. These five indicators are used to assess the extent to which public services have been implemented in accordance with public service principles and met the expectations of the public as users of religious administration services.

Analysis of these five indicators provides a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of public services at the KUA of South Dumai District, as described below.

Tangible

The tangible dimension relates to the physical condition of the service, including buildings, facilities and infrastructure, work equipment, and the service environment used by staff to provide services to the public. Adequate physical facilities are crucial because they directly impact public comfort and perception of the quality of service received.

The research results show that the tangible aspects of the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) are in a fairly good category. This is demonstrated by the condition of the KUA building, which has undergone revitalization and is considered representative as a public service office. The spacious building and well-organized environment create a positive impression for people visiting to process marriage administration.

However, limitations remain in the supporting facilities and infrastructure for services, particularly the availability of waiting chairs and administrative equipment. As the number of visitors increases, the waiting room facilities are not yet fully capable of optimally accommodating service needs. Furthermore, limited equipment, such as computers and laptops, can potentially hinder smooth service delivery if technical disruptions occur. This situation indicates that although the KUA building is physically adequate, internal facilities and infrastructure still need to be improved to ensure optimal service delivery.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the ability of government officials to provide services quickly, responsively, and appropriately to the needs and complaints of the public. Responsiveness reflects their readiness to assist the public and their willingness to provide solutions to problems faced by service users.

The research results show that the responsiveness dimension at the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is in the good category. This is reflected in the

increased number of religious instructors assisting with the service process, allowing for faster and more efficient administrative services. Some services, such as marriage transfer recommendations, can be completed relatively quickly if all requirements are met.

Furthermore, the complaint handling mechanism demonstrates good responsiveness. KUA officials strive to provide solutions directly, including by contacting the head of the KUA when necessary. Service users assess that officers are quite prompt in providing guidance and helping expedite the service process. Thus, the responsiveness of officials has supported the creation of responsive public services that are oriented towards community needs.

Reliability

The reliability dimension relates to the ability of officials to provide services promptly, accurately, consistently, and reliably in accordance with established procedures. Service reliability is a crucial factor in building public trust in public service agencies.

The research results show that the reliability aspect at the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is in the good category. KUA officials adhere to established service procedures, despite public requests to expedite the administrative process. Consistency in implementing procedures demonstrates the officials' commitment to providing services in accordance with statutory provisions.

Despite this, officials continue to strive to provide legitimate alternative solutions, such as directing the public to apply for dispensations if they encounter time constraints. The public finds the service process clear and understandable, although it requires several administrative steps. This demonstrates that the service provided is relatively reliable and trusted by the public.

Assurance

This relates to the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities of civil servants in providing a sense of security and fostering public trust in the services provided. Service assurance is reflected in the professionalism of civil servants and the service ethics they implement.

The research results show that the assurance dimension at the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is in the good category. KUA officials apply the 5S service principle (smile, greet, greet, polite, and courteous) as a core value in providing services to the public. The friendly and communicative attitude of the officials creates a comfortable service atmosphere and increases public trust.

Furthermore, there is an internal awareness of maintaining service quality, with staff taking turns when certain conditions arise that could impact service quality. Service users

believe that the polite and professional demeanor of staff provides a sense of security and confidence in the KUA's services.

Empathy

The empathy dimension relates to the ability of officials to provide individualized attention, understand community needs, and demonstrate concern during the service process. Empathy is a crucial aspect in building a humanistic relationship between officials and the community.

The research results show that empathy at the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is quite good. KUA officials not only provide administrative services but also handle consultations and complaints from the public regarding religious and marriage issues. Officers are willing to listen and provide patient explanations to the public.

However, the level of empathy shown by officers is influenced by the service conditions and the number of people attending simultaneously. As service volume increases, individual attention to people becomes more limited. Therefore, although officers' empathy has been demonstrated, improvements in this aspect are still needed to ensure more equitable delivery of personalized services.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Public Services

Public services at the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) are supported by competent human resources, the use of information technology through the Marriage Management Information System (SIMKAH), and the provision of basic service facilities. Furthermore, collaboration with sub-district officials and community leaders helps improve public understanding of marriage administration procedures.

On the other hand, services still face several obstacles, including low public understanding of marriage administration procedures, minimal outreach, limited staff numbers and capacity, and technical glitches in the digital service system. These obstacles often lead to delays in services, particularly when people arrive with incomplete documents or register close to the wedding date.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the quality of public services at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in South Dumai District is generally in the good category, based on five indicators of public service quality: tangible, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. The dimensions of responsiveness, reliability, and assurance show relatively optimal performance, characterized by fairly quick responsiveness of the apparatus, consistent service according to

procedures, and professional and friendly attitudes of officers. Meanwhile, the dimensions of tangible and empathy remain in the fairly good category, mainly influenced by limited facilities and infrastructure and limited individual attention to the community when the volume of services increases.

The findings of this study align with the research objective, which was to analyze public perceptions of public services at the Dumai Selatan District Office of Religious Affairs. The results show that the success of marriage administration services is not solely determined by the performance of the apparatus and the implementation of service standards, but is also significantly influenced by the level of public understanding and readiness to comply with administrative procedures. Thus, this study strengthens the argument that the quality of public services is the result of the interaction between service providers and service users.

Theoretically and practically, this research contributes to enriching the study of public services, particularly in the religious administration services sector at the sub-district level. This research emphasizes the importance of increasing the socialization of marriage administration procedures, strengthening supporting facilities and infrastructure, and optimizing the role of officials in providing humane and informative services. However, this study is limited by the number of informants and the scope of the study, which focuses only on one KUA. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve more informants, expand the research location, and combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the quality of public services at the KUA.

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