



PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE IN THE SIBOLGA SAMBAS DISTRICT OF NORTH SUMATRA PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze employee performance in public service delivery at the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Office, North Sumatra Province, and to identify the inhibiting factors affecting such performance. Public service performance is a key indicator in achieving good governance; therefore, employee performance plays a crucial role in determining the quality of services received by the community. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving key informants, including the subdistrict secretary, staff members, and community members as service users. The analysis of public service performance refers to the service quality dimensions proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. The findings indicate that employee performance in public service delivery at the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Office is generally categorized as fairly good, particularly in terms of responsiveness and assurance. However, several obstacles remain in the aspects of reliability and tangibles, such as limited facilities and infrastructure, as well as suboptimal service systems. The inhibiting factors include limited operational budgets, uneven workload distribution, lack of capacity-building training, and an evaluation system that has not been fully optimized. Therefore, improvement efforts are required through enhancing employee competence, strengthening performance management, and providing adequate facilities and infrastructure to sustainably improve public service quality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public service is one of the main pillars in realizing good governance and is a benchmark for the government's success in fulfilling the basic rights of the people. According to Sinambela (2005:5) in Harbani Pasolong (2010), public services are any activities carried out by the government for a group of people that are beneficial to the group or community and offer satisfaction even though the results are not tied to a physical product [1]. In accordance with Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, the government is obliged to provide quality, transparent, and accountable services [2]. However, in practice, many government agencies still face challenges in optimizing the performance of their employees as the main service providers.

An important principle in government administration is good governance. Good governance is the main objective in the delivery of services to the community. As a goal, good governance requires a process of governance that is high-quality, professional, and accountable. Public services are an important part of achieving good governance. In fact, public services are an important indicator of good governance.

Good governance is one of the most important goals in government administration. Every government agency or institution is currently competing to provide the best services and achieve good governance [3]. Good governance is providing satisfaction in the field of public services, free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism. The ultimate goal of the government system is good governance, which is good governance in all aspects.

The implementation of public services by the government through various service sector officials, especially those related to the fulfillment of civil rights and basic needs, is still considered not in line with the demands and expectations of the community. This is evident from the large number of complaints and grievances submitted directly to units/offices. Services are complicated, non-transparent, unaccommodating, and inconsistent, thus failing to guarantee certainty in terms of time and culture. Furthermore, unofficial fees are still being charged [4]. A very important aspect in implementing this is serving through various activities, and for this reason, the government has established a system of administration and government bureaucracy at the lowest level in order to provide more optimal services to the entire community and fulfill its function as a community.

Performance can generally be understood as the extent of an employee's contribution to the progress and development of the institution where he or she works. Thus, more intensive and optimal performance is required from each part of the organization in order to optimize the tasks it undertakes. The performance of an organization is very important, because with performance, the level of achievement will be visible, so that it will be possible to know the extent to which the tasks that have been carried out through the duties and authorities given can be implemented in a real and maximum manner. Performance is a description of the extent to which an activity/program has been implemented in achieving the organization's goals, objectives, mission, and vision [5].

Employee performance in public service is a key factor in determining the quality of service received by the community. Optimal performance can increase public trust in the government, while poor performance can reduce public satisfaction and create a negative image of government agencies. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), there are five main dimensions in public service, namely: Tangibles (Physical Evidence), Reliability, Responsiveness, and Assurance [6].

The Sibolga Subdistrict Office, as a regional apparatus in North Sumatra Province, has a strategic role in bridging city government policies with the community at the subdistrict level. The Sibolga region itself is a coastal area with a diverse community in terms of social, economic, and cultural characteristics. This requires adaptive and responsive public services, especially in population administration, licensing, and handling community complaints. However, based on the annual report of the Sibolga City Revenue and Public Service Agency (2022), there are still public complaints regarding the length of service processes, lack of clarity of information, and unfriendly attitudes from some employees. This phenomenon indicates problems in employee performance that need to be examined more deeply.

Theoretically, employee performance in public service is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include competence, motivation, and work ethic, while external factors include leadership, reward and punishment systems, and infrastructure support [7]. On the other hand, research by Sedarmayanti (2021) confirms that a conducive work environment and a structured performance management system also determine the success of public services [8]. However, in the context of the Sibolga Sub-District Office, there has been no comprehensive research linking these factors to the dynamics of service delivery in the field.

Based on the researcher's initial observations, several structural problems also affect employee performance. First, limited operational budgets result in minimal training to improve employee capacity. Second, uneven workloads between departments cause burnout among some employees. Third, the performance evaluation system is still administrative in nature and does not encourage innovation in service delivery. In addition, geographical factors such as travel distance and community accessibility to the sub-district office also pose challenges.

This research is important not only to identify the root causes of the problem, but also to formulate evidence-based solutions. By analyzing employee performance holistically, it is hoped that the Sibolga Sub-District Office can improve service quality, reduce public complaints, and ultimately strengthen public trust in government institutions. In addition, the findings of this study can be used as a reference for other agencies in North Sumatra that face similar challenges.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, qualitative research was used to observe the subjects in their natural state and as they are. The study will observe the performance of employees in public services at the Sibolga Subdistrict Office in North Sumatra Province.

This research was conducted at the Sibolga Subdistrict Office, Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 20, Ps. Baru, Sibolga Kota, Sibolga City, North Sumatra. Informants in this study were selected because they were the most knowledgeable or directly involved, consisting of Deputy Head of Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict, Head of Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Government, Community Leaders, Employees, and Religious Leaders.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore information regarding the roles and coordination among actors, observations were used to examine factual conditions in the field, while documentation was used to complement relevant secondary data. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes the stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [10]. Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Public services at the sub-district level are at the forefront of interaction between the government and the community. Therefore, the quality of sub-district officials' performance is a determining factor in building public trust and creating community satisfaction with government administration. Based on in-depth interviews with subdistrict officials, community leaders, religious leaders, and service users, reinforced by field observations, the performance of public services at the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Office in North Sumatra Province shows quite complex dynamics. On the one hand, there is a commitment on the part of officials to provide services in accordance with procedures, but on the other hand, there are still various structural and technical obstacles that affect the effectiveness of services.

In general, public services in the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict have been carried out in accordance with applicable regulations and standards. Subdistrict officials understand their duties and responsibilities as public servants and strive to provide services in a polite and open manner. This is reflected in the statement by the Secretary of Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict, Zurina Sihombing, who emphasized that services in the subdistrict have been carried out in accordance with established rules and procedures, despite facing limitations in terms of facilities and resources. However, the quality of services provided has not been able to fully meet the expectations of the community.

Observations show that the physical condition of the sub-district office and service facilities are still functional, but do not fully support public comfort. Limited waiting rooms, relatively outdated administrative equipment, and suboptimal use of information technology cause service processes to be less efficient, especially when the number of service applicants increases. This condition was acknowledged by Zurina Sihombing, who stated that limited operational budgets were a major obstacle to improving service facilities and infrastructure. This view was reinforced by Rizal Bakara, a community leader, who assessed that the community often had to wait quite a long time in uncomfortable waiting rooms, especially for residents who came from areas quite far from the sub-district office.

From the perspective of service quality theory, the physical condition of services plays an important role in shaping the public's initial perception of the performance of the apparatus [6]. When the physical evidence of service is inadequate, the public's assessment of service performance tends to decline, even though employees have worked according to procedure. This is in line with the opinion of Dwiyanto (2014), who states that weak support for public service facilities and infrastructure is often the cause of low public satisfaction with the performance of local government [9].

In addition to physical aspects, service reliability is also an important factor in assessing the performance of sub-district employees. Based on the results of interviews, administrative services in Sibolga Sambas Sub-district have basically been carried out in accordance with applicable standard operating procedures. Irsan Fitriadi, as Head of Government Affairs, said that every service has a clear flow and requirements, so that the community can understand the process that must be followed. However, in practice, service reliability is not yet fully consistent, especially in terms of the timeliness of service completion.

This inconsistency is inseparable from the internal conditions of the organization, particularly the uneven workload among employees. Some employees have to handle more than one type of service at the same time, which results in delays in service completion. Haryanto, one of the sub-district employees, revealed that the high workload forces employees to work extra hours and potentially experience fatigue, which ultimately affects the quality of service provided to the community. These findings show that the reliability of services does not only depend on the competence of individual employees, but also on human resource management and the fair distribution of workloads.

From the community's perspective, services in Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict are considered quite reliable, but do not yet provide complete certainty. Rizal Bakara assesses that basic administrative services are running well, but the process sometimes takes longer than expected. This means that some members of the community have to return to the subdistrict office to complete their administrative affairs. This condition is in line with Sinambela's (2010) view that the reliability of public services is greatly influenced by the balance between the capacity of the apparatus and the volume of work that must be completed [11].

The responsiveness of the apparatus in serving the community is also an important aspect in assessing the performance of public services. Based on the results of the study, Sibolga Sambas Sub-district employees showed a relatively friendly and open attitude in serving the community. Employees tried to provide explanations regarding service requirements and procedures in language that was easy to understand. However, this level of responsiveness was not entirely consistent, especially when the number of service applicants increased significantly.

Zurina Sihombing explained that at certain times, employees had difficulty responding quickly to the public due to the limited number of employees compared to the volume of services. The same thing was conveyed by Zulhamsyah Panjaitan, a religious leader, who assessed that although the employees were polite and friendly, they often looked overwhelmed when the office was busy. The researchers' observations also showed that service queues can be quite long, not because employees are unwilling to serve, but because of the organization's limited capacity to accommodate the number of service applicants.

According to Moenir (2015), the responsiveness of the apparatus is a reflection of the organization's ability to adjust its resources to service needs [12]. If an organization is not supported by an adequate work system and number of employees, it will be difficult to improve service responsiveness in a sustainable manner. The findings of this study indicate that the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict already has a good service attitude, but still needs managerial improvements to increase service responsiveness.

The aspect of service assurance and public trust in sub-district officials is also an important part of assessing public service performance. Based on the interview results, the community generally feels quite confident in the services provided by the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Office. Service procedures are considered relatively clear and straightforward, and service costs are transparent. Irsan Fitriadi emphasized that the subdistrict office strives to provide procedural certainty so that the community understands the stages of service that must be gone through.

However, this service guarantee is not yet fully felt in terms of time certainty. Rizal Bakara and Zulhamsyah Panjaitan both highlight the need to improve the certainty of service times so that the community does not have to make repeated trips to the sub-district office. The researchers' observations show that there are no publicly displayed service time standards in the service room, so the community often does not have a clear picture of how long the service process they are requesting will take.

In Tjiptono's (2016) perspective, service assurance is not only related to the polite and professional attitude of the apparatus, but also to the organization's ability to provide measurable and consistent service certainty [13]. Limited training to improve employee capacity and a performance evaluation system that is still administrative in nature in the Sibolga Sambas District have resulted in efforts to improve service quality not being fully oriented towards innovation and community satisfaction.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the performance of employees in public service at the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Office in North Sumatra Province has been quite good, but not yet optimal. Employees have shown commitment to serving the community in accordance with public service procedures and ethics. However, various structural constraints, such as limited operational budgets, uneven workloads, lack of capacity building training, and geographical and accessibility challenges, remain obstacles to improving overall service performance.

The performance of employees in public services at the Sibolga Sambas Sub-District Office in North Sumatra Province is not only determined by the attitude and commitment of individual officials, but is also greatly influenced by various structural, organizational, and work environment factors. Based on interviews with key informants and supported by field observations, this study found that there are a number of inhibiting factors that significantly affect employee performance in providing services to the community. These factors are interrelated and create service conditions that are not yet fully optimal.

One of the main obstacles to public service performance at the Sibolga Sambas Sub-District Office is limited operational budgets. Budget constraints have a direct impact on the low intensity of employee capacity building training and limitations in the provision and maintenance of service infrastructure.

The researchers' observations show that some service facilities are still conventional and do not fully support the acceleration of services, such as the suboptimal use of information technology and limited comfortable service spaces. This condition is in line with Dwiyanto's (2014) opinion, which states that limited regional budgets often have a direct impact on the low quality of public services because local governments do not have sufficient fiscal space to innovate services [9].

In addition to budget constraints, the uneven workload among employees is also a significant obstacle. Based on the results of interviews, some employees have to handle more than one type of service at the same time, especially during busy hours. This condition causes work fatigue (burnout), which has an impact on the consistency and accuracy of employees in providing services.

The researcher's observations show that on certain days, the service queue is quite long and employees are seen working simultaneously to complete various administrative tasks. According to Sinambela (2010), excessive workloads can reduce the performance of civil servants because they cause physical and psychological fatigue, which ultimately affects the quality of public services [11].

The next inhibiting factor is the employee performance evaluation system, which is still administrative in nature and does not encourage service innovation. Based on the interview results, employee performance assessments are more oriented towards fulfilling administrative obligations than towards achieving quality and public satisfaction. This condition causes employees to tend to work routinely and procedurally, without a strong incentive to make breakthroughs in improving service quality.

The researcher's observations also show that there is no reward or incentive mechanism specifically given to employees who demonstrate good service performance or are able to deliver service innovation. According to Wibowo (2016), an effective performance evaluation system should be able to encourage performance improvement through feedback, rewards, and competency development. Without a results- and quality-oriented evaluation system, employee performance tends to stagnate [15].

In addition to internal organizational factors, geographical conditions and community accessibility are also factors that hinder public service performance in Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict. Based on interviews with community and religious leaders, the distance and access conditions to the subdistrict office pose a challenge for the community, especially for residents who live far from the subdistrict center.

Observations show that people who come from areas with limited access tend to expect services to be completed in one visit. However, limited-service hours and uncertainty regarding the duration of service completion often require the community to return. According to Moenir (2015), geographical conditions and accessibility are external factors that are often overlooked but have a significant impact on the effectiveness of public services, especially in areas with diverse characteristics [12].

Another inhibiting factor that affects employee performance is the lack of capacity building and competency development training for civil servants. This situation means that employees do not yet fully possess additional skills, particularly in the use of information technology and improving the quality-of-service communication.

According to Mangkunegara (2017), training and development are important investments in improving employee performance [14]. Without adequate training, employees will find it difficult to adapt to the increasingly complex demands of public services that are oriented towards public satisfaction. This is in line with the findings of this study, where limited training has an impact on the slow improvement in service quality.

Overall, the factors that hinder employee performance in public services at the Sibolga Sambas Sub-District Office in North Sumatra Province are multidimensional and interrelated. Budget constraints, uneven workloads, ineffective performance evaluation systems, geographical conditions and community accessibility, and a lack of training to improve employee capacity are the main factors that hinder the optimization of service performance. These findings emphasize that improving public service performance cannot be done partially, but requires a comprehensive approach through organizational system reform, strengthening the capacity of the apparatus, and policy support oriented towards service quality and community satisfaction.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of interviews, field observations, and analysis of public service performance at the Sibolga Sambas Subdistrict Office in North Sumatra Province, it can be concluded that, in general, employee performance in the delivery of public services has been quite good and in accordance with applicable regulations and procedures. Sub-district employees demonstrate a relatively polite, friendly, and open attitude in serving the community and strive to provide clear service information to service users, thereby creating a fairly conducive service interaction.

When viewed from the dimension of service quality according to A. Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithaml, and Leonard L. Berry through the SERVQUAL model, the aspect of physical evidence (tangibles) shows that service facilities and infrastructure are basically available. However, these facilities do not yet fully support the comfort and efficiency of services due to limited waiting areas, simple work equipment, and the suboptimal use of information technology in the service process.

In terms of reliability, services have been carried out in accordance with applicable standard operating procedures. However, the timeliness of service completion has not been entirely consistent, mainly due to the uneven workload among employees. In terms of responsiveness, employees demonstrate a willingness and responsive attitude in serving the public. However, during busy service hours, the level of responsiveness tends to decline due to the limited number of employees compared to the volume of services that must be handled.

Meanwhile, in terms of assurance, the public generally feels confident about the services provided, particularly regarding the clarity of procedures and cost transparency. However, the assurance of service completion times still needs to be improved in order to provide a greater sense of security and certainty for the public.

The factors that hinder employee performance in public services at the Sibolga Sambas Sub-District Office include limited operational budgets, which result in minimal training and capacity building for employees; uneven workloads, which cause work fatigue in certain departments; a performance evaluation system that is still administrative in nature and does not encourage service innovation, limited facilities and infrastructure, as well as geographical conditions and community accessibility that also affect the effectiveness of public service delivery.

Overall, the performance of public services at the Sibolga Sambas Sub-District Office can be categorized as quite good. However, continuous improvement is still needed, particularly in increasing human resource capacity, equalizing workloads, optimizing facilities and infrastructure, and strengthening the performance evaluation system, so that the services provided are more effective, efficient, and oriented towards community satisfaction.

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