Complaints Management Practices on Service Performance of the Public Sector in Merauke: The Case of Merauke Local Water Company

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Abstract

Complaint management becomes significant to the community since it serves to satisfy the community's interests in the realm of public service, while for the service provider, it serves as a component for enhancing the service quality system. This study's objective was to identify and analyze complaint management in drinking and clean water services in Merauke Regency using descriptive and qualitative methodologies. Using indicators of timeliness, facilitation, redress, apology, credibility, and attention, the outcomes of complaint management research in drinking and clean water services in Merauke Regency have not been optimal. This is proven by the fact that there are still a number of things that need to be improved, including the fact that the only alternative to receiving indirect complaints is a suggestion box, and the handling is not optimal. Customers' complaints have been handled, as evidenced by PDAM's still-sluggish administration and lack of information dissemination to customers. The quantity of unresolved complaints from customers of drinking and clean water at PDAM Merauke demonstrates that the pace with which personnel handle concerns is still inadequate.

Keywords: Customer Complaints, Drinking Water Service, Complaint Management.

A. INTRODUCTION

The question of public services is a topic of strategic debate. This is due not just to the numerous negative experiences the community has had with public services, but also to the fact that the provision of quality public services is a component of the principles of good governance (Nubatonis et al., 2015). Therefore, the government is implementing numerous policy initiatives to enhance the quality of public services. The most fundamental policy objective is to transform bureaucrats' mentality from that of a ruler to that of a public servant. Other policies include the restructuring of public service institutions, the simplification of service procedures, the implementation of minimum service standards, the increased use of information and communication technology in service management, and the implementation of quality management systems in public services, including the management of the handling of public complaints (Ruslan, 2013).

In this instance, the government also promulgated Law No. 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, having previously promulgated Law No. 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, in order to bolster the foundation for ensuring higher quality service guarantees for the community. On the basis of this policy, the government, in this case the service provider bureaucracy, is obligated to develop service management that guarantees all citizens access to public
services without exception, as receiving government-organized public services is a right that must be based on standards. legal standards that clearly govern it (Dwiyanto, 2018).

Nonetheless, the contemporary phenomenon is that it has not yet been fully attained. In general, the quality of public services in Indonesia has failed to meet the expectations of service recipients. People continue to perceive government services to be inefficient, with lengthy and confusing procedures, delayed, discriminating, and non-transparent services (Kurniawan, 2016). This discontent with public services resulted in public complaints.

Hirschman's (1970) idea of "exit" and "voice" claims that the performance of public services can be enhanced if there is a "exit" and "voice" mechanism. The 'exit' mechanism stipulates that if the public service is of poor quality, the consumer/customer must be able to pick another public service provider. In the meantime, the 'voice' mechanism provides the option to communicate discontent with public service providers. In accordance with this, Ratminto and Winarsih (2014) suggest that the provision of quality public services necessitates an equilibrium between the bargaining positions of public service providers and service user communities. By implementing the concept of a customer complaint system, the equilibrium of negotiating position can be attained (customer complaint system).

Through effective and responsive complaint management, the community does not hesitate to submit their complaints because they know for sure that the complaint will be followed up. This complaint or complaint is a form of community participation (Congge, 2015). Because the existence of a good complaint submission mechanism will also make the complaint a form of introspection or a solution so that government agencies can further improve the quality of their services. Complaint management is important for the community as service recipients and for public service providers. From the consumer side, complaint management is needed primarily to accommodate the interests of consumers in public service areas where there is no possibility of an exit mechanism. Especially for consumers with weak economic levels, to meet needs such as education and health, there is almost no opportunity to choose public services other than those provided by the government (Irawan, 2017). Therefore, complaint management is needed, as a substitute for an exit mechanism to overcome these problems.

Meanwhile, in terms of public service providers, complaint management is needed to improve the public service system. Because with the complaint management, service provider organizations can find out their weaknesses and shortcomings in providing services that can be used as a tool for introspection of the organization’s self so that it is always responsive and willing to pay attention to the voice of the community, and can strengthen public trust in service organizations (Kernaghan, 2011). Service improvement can be done by utilizing the responses obtained and processing them into decision-making materials. As stated by Queensland’s Public Sector Agencies (2006) that complaint management is "a process step from receiving,
recording, processing, responding and reporting complaints and using them to improve services and decision making”.

Complaint management is also a real form of democracy, where it is believed that if something is done by listening to the public's voice, the likelihood of public satisfaction will increase, and one form of democratic practice in public services is providing opportunities for the public to file complaints. (complaint) when the service received does not meet expectations or is inconsistent with what the service provider promised (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1988).

The Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) of Merauke Regency is among the public service agencies that cannot be isolated from service user community grievances. Accessibility, dependability, affordability, and quality are fundamental societal concerns. Moreover, field observations suggested that several of the interviewed consumers were unhappy with the length of time it took PDAM Merauke to resolve their problems. The incapacity of PDAM management to manage pipeline leaks, hazy water, payments that do not match the next bill, and frequent water outages, as well as the dissatisfaction of the service user community, contribute to the occurrence of these issues.

Determining and analyzing how PDAM Kabupaten Merauke manages this issue to improve its service performance necessitates this investigation. This study aims to determine the effect of customer complaint management methods on satisfaction with service performance in the public sector and to assess the effectiveness of PDAMs in service delivery.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Public Service Concept

Public services are all forms of service, both in the form of public goods and public services, which are in principle the responsibility and are carried out by Government Agencies at the Center, in the Regions, and within State-Owned Enterprises or Regional-Owned Enterprises, in the context of fulfilling community needs and implementing the provisions of the law. Thus, efforts to deliver public goods or public services are strongly tied to the provision of public services (Ratminto & Winarsih, 2014).

Furthermore, according to Mahmudi (2013), in providing public services should always pay attention to the principles of public services, namely:

a. Transparency: Service delivery must be open, easy and accessible to all parties who need it and provided adequately and easily understood.

b. Accountability: Public services must be accountable in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations.

c. Conditional: The provision of public services must be in accordance with the conditions and capabilities of service providers and recipients while adhering to the principles of efficiency and effectiveness.
d. Participatory: Encouraging community participation in the implementation of public services by taking into account the aspirations, needs and expectations of the community.

e. Non-discriminatory (equality of rights): Public service providers must not be discriminatory in the sense of not discriminating against ethnicity, race, religion, gender, social and economic status.

f. Balance of Rights and Responsibilities: Service providers and recipients must fulfill the rights and obligations of each party.

2. Service Quality
A quality service in principle is a service that is fast, pleasant, does not contain errors, follows the processes and procedures that have been set in advance. It is these processes and procedures that must be arranged in a neat and thorough manner, along with all the tools required in the process. In such a way the detailed procedure must be followed, both by those who serve and by those who are served. So, quality service is not only determined by those who serve, but also those who want to be satisfied (Batinggi & Ahmad, 2013).

Ratminto & Atik (2014) the most essential thing in improving the quality of public services is the existence of an equal relationship between the service user community and the apparatus in charge of providing services. Public services will only be good or of good quality if the people who manage certain types of services have a bargaining position that is comparable to the bargaining position of service providers.

3. Exit and Voice Theory
According to the exit and voice theory introduced by Albert Hirschman in 1970, public service performance can be enhanced if there is an exit and voice mechanism. The exit mechanism stipulates that if a public service is not of good quality, the consumer/customer must be able to pick another public service provider. In the meanwhile, the voice mechanism provides the option to voice discontent with public service providers.

Hirschman also explained that the exit mechanism is usually hampered by several factors such as coercive power from the State, the absence of alternative public service providers, and the absence of costs to create alternative public service providers. Meanwhile, voice mechanisms are usually ineffective because of knowledge and trust in existing mechanisms, and the accessibility and cost of using these mechanisms. Thus, to be able to improve the quality of public services, it is necessary to have an equal bargaining position between consumers/customers and service providers. In more detail, the balance of bargaining position between service providers and the community as service users can be achieved by applying the following concepts. All of these concepts do not need to be applied, but they can be chosen according to the characteristics of the public services provided. These concepts are (Ratminto & Atik, 2014): (1) Customer’s Charter, (2) Customer service
standard; (3) Customer redress; (4) Quality guarantees; (5) Quality inspectors; (6) Customer complaint system (7) Ombudsmen; (8) Competitive public choice systems; (9) Vouchers and reimbursement programs; (10) Customer information systems and brokers; (11) Competitive bidding; (12) Competitive benchmarking; (13) Privatization; (14) Salary system based on merit; (15) Work system based on contract; (16) 360° work performance evaluation system

4. Complaint Management Concept

Tjiptono (2002) says that complaint management is "a form of handling or structuring, arrangements made by an organization in resolving / overcoming complaints or reactions to customer dissatisfaction or disapproval of the process of using organizational resources, coordinating organizational activities, and on the activities of the management function carried out inefficiently and effectively by the organization". Complaint management will become a legitimacy buffer from the management of public services. Complaint management is a part of the public service system to facilitate, accommodate and manage customer complaints for the public services it receives. These mechanisms include submission procedures, organizational tools, transparency mechanisms, consumer participation media, and community empowerment tools (Suparto, 2006: 93).

Meanwhile, according to Kernaghan (2011) "complaint management is a mechanism for initiatives, approaches, and techniques to increase customer satisfaction with the organization's products and services. Here the effort to anticipate and prevent problems caused by complaints is to immediately and appropriately handle complaints through an internal process and when the internal complaint handling process is proven to be insufficient, then resolve disputes fairly, effectively and efficiently through an external dispute resolution approach. An effective complaint management system is a core part of providing service quality which is a measure of customer satisfaction. This complaint management provides positive feedback on aspects of the service that are working well and is a useful source of information for improvement. That way, complaint management can also be said as a form of "voice" approach from consumers in responding to the public services they receive. In this case, complaint management will ensure that the response (voice) from consumers can be managed properly to be able to influence important decisions in the implementation of public services.

C. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design. Sale & Thielke (2018) defines qualitative research as a research process that focuses on the interpretation and exploration of meaning in social and human problems. Qualitative research is also defined as a systematic and organized search and data collection activity carried out through interviews and observations (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015) and can also be carried out through contextual data analysis such as analyzing documents (Cepeda & Martin, 2005). Sources of data were obtained through informants who were
directly related to service activities and *complaint management*, including: Director of the Hospital, Head of Service Division, Service Staff, Hospital Officers (doctors and nurses), and users of hospital services (patients/community). Data is also obtained through events or phenomena that occur at the research location in accordance with the research focus. Other data sources are documents related to the research focus. While the data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles & Huberman model, which suggests that the activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until complete, so that the data is saturated. There are three activities in data analysis, namely: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

**D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Providing satisfaction with clean water services to the community is a major obligation for the government. However, sometimes the services provided are not optimal and do not meet customer expectations. So that some of them complain and submit their complaints to the service provider. Based on the results of interviews with informants, that complaints that are often made by customers to officers are related to the production capacity that is channeled to consumers who have not been handled properly. The quantity of water delivered by several Water Treatment Plants (IPA) in Merauke Regency still requires additional clean water supply because it has not provided optimal and equitable service to all customers, as for the cause of the problem that occurs is the availability of raw water in Rawa Biru which decreases during the rainy season. drought and yellowing water quality due to rotting swamp grass.

For this reason, it can be said that the complaints felt by the clean water customer community in Merauke Regency are almost the same as the problems complained of by the community in general. That is related to the problems of facilities and services of the PDAM. This indicates that the services provided by PDAM Merauke Regency have not run optimally. So that complaint management becomes important in order to accommodate and make the incoming complaints as information in improving the quality of services provided by the government.

The first time that the officers received complaints from the public has been tried to be done well by the Merauke PDAM, namely by being a good listener, calm, and trying to empathize with customers. This is in accordance with the theory proposed by Tjiptono (2012) that in dealing with emotional or angry customers, customer service staff must be level-headed and empathetic. Because if not, the situation will get worse. For that, it is necessary to take time to listen to their complaints and try to understand the situation felt by the patient.

Meanwhile, to receive indirect complaints, the PDAM prepares a complaint form in the suggestion box. Customers can fill out the complaint sheet with their identity and the type of problem complained of. The incoming complaints are then recapitulated and documented by PDAM officers to be followed up with related
parties. The first step taken by the PDAM after receiving a complaint is to identify the complaint.

In accepting this incoming complaint, PDAM Merauke has been in accordance with what was conveyed by Tjiptono (2012) that the process of handling complaints effectively starts from identifying and determining the source of the problem that causes customers to be dissatisfied and complain. This step is a very important step because it determines the next steps. Thus, it can be said that the process of receiving complaints from PDAM Merauke has been going well, because what has been done is in accordance with the theory put forward. To analyze complaint management in clean and drinking water services in Merauke Regency more deeply, the researcher uses 6 measurement indicators proposed by Davidow (2003) with the following results:

1. Timeliness

That is the accuracy felt by customers who give complaints when the PDAM responds or handles complaints. In handling complaints that come in, PDAM Merauke always resolves them as quickly as possible, because if you have to wait any longer it is feared that other complaints will be submitted by other customers. However, if the complaint requires further clarification and identification, the PDAM will notify the customer to be patient.

In handling incoming complaints, PDAM Merauke has done well, namely complaints that have been submitted are immediately processed according to the existing SOP. Where the complaint handling process starts from receiving and identifying the problems posed by the patient. For complaints that are classified as mild and moderate, the PDAM takes no more than 1x24 hours. As for complaints that are classified as severe, of course it takes longer. However, this is not the case with complaints that come through the suggestion box. Because checking the suggestion box is not carried out routinely, which means that incoming complaints cannot be immediately accepted by the PDAM.

Davidow (2000) shows that punctuality has a positive impact on complaint handling satisfaction, and has an effect on intention to reuse services. So that a fast response is needed by service provider organizations in handling incoming customer complaints. The fast response is evidenced by the timeliness in resolving complaints submitted by customers.

Thus, if it is connected between the phenomena that occur in the field and existing theories, it can be said that the complaint handling process carried out by PDAM Merauke has not been fully implemented optimally. This is because the timeliness in handling complaints can only be seen in complaints made directly, but not with indirect complaints, namely through the suggestion box.

2. Facilitation

This dimension relates to the policies and procedures that a company has in place to facilitate the handling of complaints. How companies make it easy for consumers to complain. Research conducted by Davidow (2000) illustrates how necessary it is to have the right infrastructure in place to handle complaints. Making
a complaint-handling mechanism available (facilitation) has a positive impact on the possibility to complain to the organization concerned rather than telling the problem to someone else.

PDAM Merauke in order to meet the needs of its customers to submit complaints or complaints, the PDAM provides a suggestion box facility as an alternative for submitting complaints. The suggestion box owned by PDAM Merauke is installed at the service counter, making it easier for customers to submit complaints, criticisms or suggestions regarding clean water services carried out by PDAMs.

Based on the results of field observations, it was found that facilities in the form of suggestion boxes seemed to be neglected. There are suggestion boxes without locks, and there are even ones that don’t provide stationery and forms. So that customers who want to submit complaints may sometimes be confused where to write them. Because if they don’t fill in the complaint in the form provided, of course the PDAM will find it difficult to contact them again.

From the results of the interview, it was also known that there were still several obstacles in the implementation of handling complaints through the suggestion box, such as taking the suggestion box form which had not been carried out optimally, as well as incomplete data on the complainant so that he could not be contacted again. From customer information, PDAM Merauke still does not have sufficient facilities to accommodate complaints from customers. Because there is only a suggestion box that can be used as an alternative for customers to submit their complaints to PDAM. Even then, it still has to be colored by the not optimal management of the suggestion box by the PDAM, and there are several suggestion boxes that are not taken care of.

So far, PDAM Merauke has only focused on complaints given by customers through the complaint counter. So that people who are going to complain about their complaints can only come directly to the office, but it cannot be done in other ways. Even though sometimes we also know that there are people who cannot come directly to the office so that they need access to complaint reception services in other ways.

3. Credibility

That is the willingness of service providers to provide explanations or accountability for existing problems. Although it is clear that the customer complains to receive compensation, he also wants to know what the organization/company will do to prevent future problems (Davidow & Dacin, 1996). This explanation goes a long way in building the credibility of the organization in the eyes of customers, thereby potentially increasing their satisfaction with the response they receive.

A good and appropriate way of delivery is needed to customers so that customers can understand the explanation given by the service provider. The explanation must be conveyed properly and clearly so that there is no
misunderstanding between the two parties. Therefore, the skills of officers are the main key in this case.

The credibility of PDAM Merauke in handling complaints is shown by always trying to provide explanations and accountability for what customers complain about. This becomes very urgent because this explanation and accountability goes a long way to building the credibility of the organization in the eyes of customers, thereby potentially increasing their satisfaction with the response received (Davidow, 2000).

Based on the findings obtained in the field and confirmation of the theory, it shows that PDAM Merauke’s efforts in building organizational credibility in handling complaints have gone well for direct complaints, namely by providing good explanations so that customers can understand and not cause misunderstandings. However, this has not been maximized in the complaints submitted through the suggestion box. Because, there has been no response given by the PDAM to customers who complain through the suggestion box. Complaints that come in are like being accommodated without further clarification to the complainant. So this is what triggers public distrust if the PDAM really resolves the complaints they submit.

4. Attentiveness

Attention is the concern, friendliness, and courtesy that customers receive from a company or its personnel. According to Bitner, Boom, and Tetreault (1990), the form (in addition to the substance) of employee responses impacts customer satisfaction. They stressed that it was not only the basic services that produced discontent, but also ineffective personnel reactions. Collie, Sparks, and Bradley (2000) discovered that service provider civility and respect (attention) had a favorable effect on fairness and satisfaction. In the meantime, according to Davidow (2000), attentiveness was the most important primary dimension, had the highest effect on each customer satisfaction dimension, and was the most influential factor in service reuse.

Customers who lodge complaints are typically in an emotional or irate condition, necessitating special care when addressing them. Therefore, it is vital to take the time to listen to consumer grievances and attempt to comprehend their situation. According to PDAM Merauke, resolving a complaint requires attention, which entails showing concern and compassion for the problems experienced by clients.

By taking the time to listen to client complaints and attempting to comprehend their position, the PDAM demonstrates that it cares about the problems that consumers have complained about. In response to customer complaints, PDAM Merauke also expressed gratitude for the comments and ideas provided by PDAM Merauke.

Thus, the results of the study show that PDAM Merauke’s attention in handling complaints is shown by accepting, listening and trying to find solutions to what customers complain about. This is in accordance with what was said by
Davidow (2000), that attention is the most important main dimension, where attention refers to the caring, friendly and respectful attitude given by the organization to customers who complain.

5. Apology

That is an apology for the discrepancy for what has been felt by the customer. Apologies are an important element in handling complaints because the apologies given have shown an attitude of appreciation to customers. This has also been done by PDAM Merauke if a customer submits a complaint. However, this was not fully carried out by PDAM Merauke officers in this case the administrative officer who was at the front counter. Apologies were only obtained from the office leadership, namely the head of service or the head of the public relations section.

Thus, if seen from what was stated by Davidow (2000) that every organization should be able to consider the apology as psychological compensation, PDAM Merauke has not fully done it. The PDAM still considers the apology as something normal. Therefore, not all PDAM officers, especially those in charge of handling customer complaints, are willing to do this.

6. Redress

Redress is the final dimension of the complaint handling process. Because here we see what results are received by customers after they submit complaints to service providers. The desired result of what is conveyed by the customer to the organizer is satisfaction with the complaint handler. Kottler (1997) says that customers who submit their complaints and are given a quick and precise explanation are very likely to have a higher level of satisfaction than those who do not.

Based on the findings in the field, it shows that the PDAM always provides accurate explanations in providing solutions to problems felt by customers. Then the PDAM approached the customer by asking if there was still something to be re-submitted, so that it could make the customer feel that the PDAM was paying attention to the complaint submitted.

Majid (2009) said that providing correct, accurate, and simple explanations as desired by customers, our ability to handle customers who complain will result in a win-win solution. A smile is not enough, because customers who have problems need empathy that is manifested in concrete actions for a solution.

Thus, we can see that PDAM Merauke's steps in providing solutions to customer complaints have been running properly. However, the results of these actions have not been fully felt by customers. This is evidenced by the absence of information or response from the PDAM on complaints that come from the suggestion box.

E. CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of complaint management in drinking and clean water services in Merauke Regency using indicators of timeliness, facilitation, redress, apology, credibility, and attentiveness (Davidow: 2003) have not shown maximum
results. This is indicated by the fact that there are still some things that need to be improved, namely there is only a suggestion box as an alternative to receiving complaints that come in indirectly, and the handling is not optimal. This is evident from the still slow management and the absence of information delivery from PDAM to customers that incoming complaints have been handled. The speed of employees in handling complaints is also still low, this is proven by the number of complaints from customers of drinking and clean water at PDAM Merauke still piling up and not being resolved. So, by looking at the conclusions above, the authors suggest to make improvements and improvements in terms of facilities for submitting complaints, such as by repairing suggestion boxes whose conditions are damaged and neglected, improving their management, and adding other alternatives to receive patient complaints, one of which is the SMS center. Then disseminate information to the public/customers on how to submit complaints to service providers, perhaps in the form of leaflets or brochures containing complete information on how to submit complaints and procedures for handling them. As well as conducting special training for public relations officers and other officers related to customer complaints regarding complaint management in an effort to increase customer satisfaction with handling complaints submitted.

REFERENCES
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