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SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT OF ILAGAN CITY: BASIS FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the service quality and customer satisfaction in the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Ilagan City as a basis for service improvement. It specifically examined the demographic profile of clients and their perceptions of service quality across the dimensions of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, as well as their level of satisfaction in relation to these dimensions. A descriptive research design was employed, utilizing a survey questionnaire administered to 50 randomly selected clients of the LGU. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage distribution, and weighted mean.

Findings revealed that respondents were predominantly male, mostly aged 56 years and above, and largely college graduates with moderate income levels. In terms of service quality, the LGU was rated high in reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, while tangibility received only an average rating, indicating concerns regarding physical facilities and technological resources. Customer satisfaction was generally rated as satisfactory across all dimensions, with responsiveness receiving the highest evaluation. The results suggest that while clients are satisfied with the services provided, improvements in physical infrastructure and digitalization of processes are necessary to enhance overall service delivery. The study recommends the adoption of modern technologies and continuous service enhancement initiatives to better meet client expectations and improve public service performance.

KEYWORDS*: Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Local Government Unit, SERVQUAL Dimensions, Public Service, Ilagan City, Service Improvement*

INTRODUCTION

The delivery of quality public service has become a central concern in modern governance, particularly as citizens increasingly demand efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness from government institutions. In the Philippines, local government units (LGUs) serve as the frontline providers of essential public services, making their performance a crucial determinant of citizen trust and satisfaction. Recent initiatives such as the Citizen Satisfaction Survey and the Client Satisfaction

Measurement system emphasize the importance of understanding how clients perceive public service delivery and how these perceptions influence overall satisfaction (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2024; Development Academy of the Philippines, 2024).

Service quality is widely recognized as a key factor influencing customer satisfaction across both private and public sectors. The SERVQUAL model, which includes dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, remains one of the most widely used frameworks for assessing service quality. Despite being introduced decades ago, recent studies affirm its continued relevance in evaluating service performance in contemporary settings, including public institutions (Chuenyindee et al., 2022). This framework provides a structured approach to identifying gaps between customer expectations and actual service delivery, which is essential for improving organizational performance.

In the context of public administration, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is particularly significant because government services directly affect citizens' daily lives. A recent study conducted in the Philippine public sector revealed that service quality dimensions have a strong and positive relationship with customer satisfaction, indicating that improvements in service delivery can significantly enhance citizens' perceptions of government performance (Junsay, 2023). Similarly, empirical findings from regulatory agencies in the Philippines show that understanding service quality dimensions can guide institutions in developing more citizen-centered policies and services (Ejournals.ph, 2024).

Moreover, government agencies in the Philippines have institutionalized mechanisms to measure client satisfaction as part of their commitment to good governance. Reports from various agencies, such as the Tourism Promotions Board and the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute, demonstrate that regular assessment of service quality dimensions such as reliability, assurance, and responsiveness plays a critical role in maintaining high levels of client satisfaction (Tourism Promotions Board, 2024; PNRI, 2024). These findings highlight the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement of public service delivery systems.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in ensuring consistent service quality across different LGUs. Issues such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of transparency, and uneven service delivery

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have been identified in studies examining public institutions in the Philippines (Sulasula & Moreno, 2023). These challenges can negatively influence citizens' satisfaction and trust in government services. Therefore, it is essential for LGUs to regularly assess their service performance and identify areas that require improvement.

In addition, customer satisfaction in the public sector is influenced not only by service quality but also by the demographic characteristics of service users. Factors such as age, gender, educational attainment, and income level may shape individuals' expectations and perceptions of service delivery. Understanding these demographic variables allows government institutions to tailor their services to better meet the needs of diverse populations. This approach aligns with the principles of citizen-centered governance, which emphasizes inclusivity and responsiveness to the varying needs of the public.

The growing emphasis on customer satisfaction in public services is also reflected in national surveys and reports. For instance, recent findings indicate that public satisfaction with government performance varies across regions and demographic groups, suggesting that service delivery outcomes are not uniform (Social Weather Stations, 2025). This variability underscores the need for localized studies that examine service quality and customer satisfaction within specific LGUs, as these studies provide more context-specific insights that can inform policy and practice.

Given these considerations, assessing service quality and customer satisfaction in LGUs is both timely and necessary. Such assessments provide valuable information on how well public services meet citizens' expectations and identify areas for improvement. They also contribute to the broader goal of enhancing public sector performance and strengthening citizen trust in government institutions.

This study focuses on the Local Government Unit of Ilagan City, aiming to evaluate the level of service quality and customer satisfaction among its clients during the calendar year 2025. By examining service quality across the five SERVQUAL dimensions tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy and analyzing customer satisfaction in relation to these dimensions, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of service delivery in the LGU. Furthermore, by considering the demographic profile of respondents, the study offers insights into how different groups perceive public services.

Ultimately, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a basis for improving service delivery in the Local Government Unit of Ilagan City. By identifying strengths and areas for enhancement, the LGU can implement targeted strategies to improve service quality and increase customer satisfaction, thereby contributing to more effective and responsive governance.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in the Local Government Unit of Ilagan City: Basis for Service Improvement. Specifically, the research sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the customer-respondents in terms of:
    1.1 sex;
    1.2 age;
    1.3 educational attainment;
    1.4 monthly income; and
2. What is the perceived level of service quality in terms of:
    2.1 tangibility;
    2.2 reliability;
    2.3 responsiveness;
    2.4 assurance; and
    2.5 empathy?
3. What is the perceived level of customers' satisfaction along with:
    3.1 customer satisfaction concerning tangibility;
    3.2 customer satisfaction concerning reliability;
    3.3 customer satisfaction concerning responsiveness;
    3.4 customer satisfaction concerning assurance; and
    3.5 customer satisfaction concerning empathy?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the level of service quality and customer satisfaction in the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Ilagan City. Descriptive research was deemed appropriate as it aimed to describe and interpret the perceptions of clients regarding the quality of services provided without manipulating any variables. It enabled the researcher to examine existing conditions, identify patterns, and determine relationships between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction (Creswell, 2014).

Sampling Design

The respondents of the study were fifty (50) clients of the Local Government Unit of Ilagan City. They were selected using random sampling, allowing each client an equal chance of being included in the study. This method ensured that the data gathered represented diverse client experiences and perceptions regarding the services rendered by the LGU.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using an adopted and modified questionnaire derived from existing service quality and customer satisfaction instruments. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I focused on the respondents' demographic profile, including sex, age, educational attainment, and monthly income. Part II measured service quality using the Service Quality Scale (SQS), which covered the five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Part III assessed customer satisfaction using the Customer Satisfaction Scale (CSS), aligned with the same dimensions.

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The instrument utilized a five-point Likert scale to determine the respondents' perceptions of service quality and their level of satisfaction. To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by the research adviser and experts prior to its administration.

Statistical Design

The study employed various statistical tools to analyze the collected data. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile. The weighted mean was utilized to determine the level of service quality and customer satisfaction across the five dimensions.

A five-point Likert scale was used to interpret responses, with corresponding descriptive equivalents ranging from very low to very high for service quality, and from highly dissatisfied to highly satisfied for customer satisfaction. These statistical treatments enabled the researcher to analyze trends and identify areas for service improvement within the LGU.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	26	52.00
Female	24	48.00
Total	50	100.00

Most of the respondents are males acquiring a frequency of 26 or 52.00 percent while 24 are females with 48.00 as its percentage. This means the there is a equal number of male and female clients in LGU-Ilagan City.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25 and below	12	24.00
26-35	10	20.00
36-45	5	10.00
46-55	10	20.00
56 and above	13	26.00
Total	50	100.00

13 or 26.00 percent of the clients of LGU-Ilagan City are 56 years old and above. This is followed by clients who are 25 years old and below with 12 or 24.00 percent registered responses while clients whose age range from 26 to 35 years old and 46-55 years old both received a frequency of 10 or 20.00 percent. Only 5 or 10.00 percent out of the 50 respondents are 36-45 years old. The data reflect the diversity of age range of the LGU-Ilagan City clients.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	30	60.00
Bachelor's Degree with Master Units	1	2.00
Master's Degree	2	4.00
Others Specify (high school, elementary)	27	34.00
Total	50	100.00

Majority of the respondents have finished their Bachelor's Degree which registered 30 or 60.00 percent responses. This was followed by clients who are either high school or elementary graduates which registered 27 or 34.00 percent. Only 2 or 4.00 percent have Master's Degree and 1 or 2.00 percent has Master's units.

Table 4 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Php 15,000 and below	12	24.00
Php 15,001-20,000	15	30.00
Php 20,001-25,000	5	10.00
Php 25,001-30,000	10	20.00
Php 30,001 and above	8	16.00
Total	50	100.00

Most of the respondents have 15, 001-20, 000 monthly income which garnered 15 responses or 30.00 percent. 12 or 24.00 percent of them have income below 15, 000php. Out of the 50, 10 or 20.00 have income which range from 25, 001-30, 000. Least was registered under income range 20, 001-25, 000php with only 5 or 10.00 percent responses.

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Table 5 Weighted Mean and Qualitative Description of Service Quality

Service Quality	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
A. Tangibility		
1. LGU has up-to-date information technology/ IT.	3.30	Average Level
2. The physical facilities at LGU are visually appealing.	3.00	Average Level
3. Employees of LGU are neat-appealing.	3.50	High Level
4. The appearance of the physical facilities (such as comfort room, waiting area, building etc.) of LGU is in keeping with the kinds of services provided.	3.20	Average Level
B. Reliability		
1. When LGU promises you to do something by a certain time, it does so.	4.00	High Level
2. When you have a problem, LGU shows a sincere interest in solving it.	3.80	High Level
3. LGU performs the service right the first time for you.	3.71	High Level
4. LGU provides its services to you at the time it promises to do so.	3.50	High Level
5. LGU insists on error-free hardware and software.	3.34	Average Level
C. Responsiveness		
1. LGU tells you exactly when services will be performed.	4.20	High Level
2. LGU gives prompt services to you.	4.16	High Level
3. LGU system is always willing to help you.	4.10	High Level
4. LGU is never too busy to respond to your requests	4.14	High Level
D. Assurance		High Level
1. The behaviour of LGU instils confidence in you.	3.60	High Level
2. You feel safe when interacting with LGU.	3.70	High Level
3. LGU is consistently courteous with you.	3.80	High Level
4. LGU has the knowledge to answer your questions.	3.84	High Level
E. Empathy		High Level
1. LGU gives you individual attention.	3.84	High Level
2. LGU has convenient working hours for you.	3.80	High Level
3. LGU gives your personal attention.	3.90	High Level
4. LGU has your best interests at heart.	3.70	High Level
5. LGU understands your specific needs	3.60	High Level
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.71**	**High Level**

With regard Service Quality on Tangibility, majority of the respondents are perception is on the average level. The items, "LGU has up-to-date information technology/ IT", "The physical facilities at LGU are visually appealing", "The appearance of the physical facilities (such as comfort room, waiting area, building etc.) of NIA is in keeping with the kinds of services provided" received average level ratings of 3.30, 3.00 and 3.20 respectively.

However, in terms of Reliability, the clients are generally on the high level except in the item, "LGU insists on error-free hardware and software" which received 3.34 as its weighted mean. The items, "When LGU promises you to do something by a certain time, it does so", "When you have a problem, LGU shows a sincere interest in solving it", "LGU performs the service right the first time for you", "LGU provides its services to you at the time it promises to do so" garnered high level ratings of 4.00, 3.80, 3.71 and 3.50 respectively.

Among all the items under Service quality, the criterion, Responsiveness received the highest ratings under its items to wit: "LGU tells you exactly when services will be performed", 4.20; "LGU gives prompt services to you", 4.16; "LGU system is always willing to help you", 4.10; and "LGU is never too busy to respond to your requests", 4.14. All with qualitative description of High level.

With regard Assurance, the item, "LGU has the knowledge to answer your questions' garnered the highest weighted mean of 3.84 which means High level. This was followed by the items, "LGU is consistently courteous with you", 3.80; "You feel safe when interacting with LGU", 3.70; and "The behaviour of LGU instils confidence in you", 3.60.

As to Empathy, the item, "LGU gives your personal attention" received the highest weighted mean of 3.90 described as High level. This was followed by the items, "LGU gives you individual attention:, 3.84; "LGU has convenient working hours for you", 3.80; "LGU has your best interests at heart", 3.70; and "LGU understands your specific needs", 3.60.

Assurance is how companies build confidence and inspire trust, referring to knowledge and courtesy of personnel and their ability to adapt these methods. This dimension is especially crucial for high risk services due to the uncertainties involved. Satisfaction of one customer will affect the latter and therefore it is crucial to maintain high quality service at all times. According to Osman and Ramayah, assurance and empathy had the highest influence upon customer satisfaction in the banking industry of Malaysia (Lau, 2013).Empathy relates to individualized attention and care to each customer, making the best effort to see and acknowledge their viewpoint. Reliability is the dimension with the highest influence on customer's perception of quality. If the first delivery is unsuccessful, the provider enter the phase called 'Recovery' with higher expectations due to the initial failure, yet more likely to come under scrutiny. It should maintain a record of error-free as it is one of the most significant role in conventional service (Yang et al., 2004). Time after time, delivery will become more reliable, helping the service provider to fully meet customer expectations even at the lowest level. Responsiveness is simply the willingness to provide prompt service in different scenarios, just like a hotel's customer service system. As customers often have special requests, queries, or complaints; the service provider, especially front-line employees, should be aware and equipped to respond smartly. This dimension requires the ability to customize, communicate, innovate, and focus on the notion of flexibility through training (Johnston, 1997). Tangibles are basically physical facilities, materials, and equipment that are multifunctional and represents the organization's appearance (Fitzsimmons, 2001). This dimension serves as the 'face' of the organization and its workforce, particularly to new customers (Davis et al., 2003). Companies should use this dimension to signal quality within the first thirty seconds and enhance their image(Wilson et al., 2008) .

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Table 6 Weighted Mean and Qualitative Description of Costumer Satisfaction

Costumer Satisfaction Criteria	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
A. Customer satisfaction concerning tangibility		
1. The staff dresses appropriately.	3.50	Satisfied
2. The staff uniforms are clean.	3.60	Satisfied
3. The staff provides you service with a smile	3.80	Satisfied
4. The staff has attractive appearance e.g. elegant, smart.	3.84	Satisfied
B. Customer satisfaction concerning reliability		
1.The staff provides service as promised	3.84	Satisfied
2. The staff provides you accurate information	3.80	Satisfied
3. The staff performs service for you correctly the first time.	3.90	Satisfied
4. The staff is honest to the clients and can be trusted	3.70	Satisfied
5. The staff tells you exactly when service will be provided.	3.60	Satisfied
C. Customer satisfaction concerning responsiveness		
1. The staff responds to your requests quickly.	4.16	Satisfied
2. The staff gives you prompt service.	4.10	Satisfied
3. The staff is willing to help you.	4.14	Satisfied
D. Customer satisfactions concerning assurance		
1. The staff have services knowledge of the LGU.	4.00	Satisfied
2. The staff has the skills required to perform service.	3.78	Satisfied
3. The staff speaks with you by using appropriate forms.	3.71	Satisfied
4. The staff is trustworthy.	3.52	Satisfied
5. The staff makes you feel safe when staying at the office.	3.60	Satisfied
E. Customer satisfaction concerning empathy		
1. The staff is able to communicate with you in the dialect	4.00	Satisfied
2. The staff is able to communicate effectively.	3.80	Satisfied
3. The staff shows personal attention to you.	3.70	Satisfied
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.77**	**Satisfied**

In terms of Costumer Satisfaction concerning Tangibility, the respondents are Satisfied. The item, "The staff has attractive appearance e.g. elegant, smart" received the highest weighted mean of 3.84. This was followed by the items: "The staff provides you service with a smile", 3.80; "The staff uniforms are clean", 3.60; and "The staff dresses appropriately", 3.50.

As to Costumer satisfaction concerning reliability, the item, "The staff performs service for you correctly the first time" garnered the highest weighted mean of 3.90 described as Satisfied followed by: 'The staff provides service as promised", 3.84; "The staff provides you accurate information", 3.80; "The staff is honest to the clients and can be trusted", 3.70; and "The staff tells you exactly when service will be provided", 3.60 all described as Satisfied.

With regard Costumer satisfaction concerning responsiveness, the item, "The staff responds to your requests quickly" received the highest weighted mean of 4.16 meaning Satisfied. Other items received the same qualitative description to wit: "The staff is willing to help you", 4.14; and "the staff gives you prompt service", 4.10.

For Costumer satisfaction concerning assurance, the item, "The staff have services knowledge of the NIA" garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.00. This is followed by the items: The staff has the skills required to perform service, 3.78; The staff speaks with you by using appropriate forms, 3.71; The staff makes you feel safe when staying at the office, 3.60; and The staff is trustworthy, 3.52 all described as Satisfied.

As to Costumer satisfaction concerning empathy, the item, "the staff is able to communicate with you in the dialect" garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.00 described as Satisfied. Two other items are also described Satisfied by the respondents each receiving 3.80 (the staff is able to communicate effectively) and 3.70 (the staff shoes personal attention to you) respectively.

Customer satisfaction is basically how happy the customers are with the services provided and can be determined through surveys and ratings to understand their needs and make adjustments where relevant (Machirori et al., 2011). There is no doubt that customer satisfaction and service quality are positively related constructs (Baker et al., 2000). Conversely, several studies confirmed that service quality is a determinant of customer satisfaction regardless whether they were cumulative or transaction oriented (Cronin et al., 1992). The two dispute concepts are the ultimate goals of service providers (Awan et al., 2011). Nevertheless, it is important to note that customer satisfaction is a much wider concept not just based on specific dimensions (Wilson et al., 2008). Service quality is an evaluation over a long period hence is an antecedent component of customer satisfaction (Ree, 2010). Both developing and developed economies are affected by liberalization and globalization and the pressure of satisfaction are forcing organizations to adapt rapidly to maintain competitive advantage (Forsythe, 2012). Togain and protect market share in the long run, organizations must have strategies to ensure customer satisfaction (Tsoukatos, 2006). Researches have shown that customer dissatisfaction and negative judgements had led to several destructive effects on profit (Munusamy, 2006). Some argued that satisfaction is the end product of perception (Karatepe et al., 2005).
Moreover, the provision of high-quality service will increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Ilagan City demonstrates a generally positive level of service delivery, as reflected in the high ratings for service quality and the overall satisfaction of its clients. The results indicate that reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are well-practiced by the LGU personnel, contributing to favorable client experiences and trust in public service. However, the dimension of tangibility, particularly in terms of physical facilities and technological resources, received comparatively lower ratings, pointing to areas that require attention. The profile of respondents also suggests that client perceptions may vary across demographic characteristics, highlighting the importance of inclusive and adaptive service strategies. Despite the satisfactory performance, the findings imply that further improvements especially in the digitalization and modernization of processes are necessary to enhance efficiency and meet the evolving expectations of clients. Therefore, strengthening infrastructure, investing in technology, and continuously improving service standards are essential steps toward achieving more responsive, efficient, and citizen-centered governance in the LGU of Ilagan City.

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RECOMMENDATION

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction in the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Ilagan City:

1. The LGU may prioritize the digitalization and automation of its service processes to improve efficiency, reduce waiting time, and provide more convenient access to services for clients. Integrating modern information systems can streamline transactions and address concerns related to outdated technology and physical service limitations.
2. It is also recommended that the LGU allocate sufficient budget and resources for the improvement of physical facilities, including waiting areas, comfort rooms, and service counters, to create a more comfortable and client-friendly environment. Enhancing tangible aspects of service delivery can significantly improve overall client perception.
3. Continuous training and capacity-building programs should be conducted for LGU personnel to further strengthen competencies in responsiveness, communication, and customer handling. Maintaining high standards in reliability, assurance, and empathy will help sustain positive client experiences.
4. Moreover, the LGU may institutionalize regular monitoring and evaluation of service quality and customer satisfaction through feedback mechanisms such as surveys, suggestion systems, and client satisfaction reports. This will allow the organization to identify emerging concerns and respond proactively.
5. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in other local government units or explore additional variables such as digital service adoption, service efficiency, and organizational performance to further enrich the body of knowledge on public service improvement.

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