

Analysis of Service Quality of Tirta Mukti Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Cianjur Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the service quality of Tirta Mukti Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Cianjur Regency in providing clean water to the community. The background of this study is based on the high number of customer complaints related to water distribution, service quality, and billing systems. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with snowball sampling techniques in determining informants. Data analysis was conducted based on the theory of service quality from Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990), which includes five dimensions of SERVQUAL: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The results of the study showed that although PDAM Tirta Mukti has a wide service coverage and shows a fairly high public satisfaction score, there are still various problems, including many customers who complain because they do not receive water supply, damaged water pipes that cause water to go out, high bills, and small water discharge. Therefore, continuous improvement efforts are needed to improve the quality of service in order to fulfill the community's right to clean water that is decent and evenly distributed.

Keywords: Service Quality, PDAM, Clean Water, SERVQUAL, Public Service

1. INTRODUCTION

Several previous studies have shown that the quality of clean water services provided by PDAM (Regional Drinking Water Companies) in various regions still faces significant challenges, which directly affect customer satisfaction. For example, research conducted by Sulaiha (2020) on PDAM Tirtanadi Tulasan Branch revealed that the public often complained about low water pressure, poor water quality, and slow responses to customer complaints. This condition indicates that even though customers continue to pay their bills regularly, the services they receive do not meet their expectations. Similar research by Kartini (2023) on PDAM Tirta Siak in Pekanbaru City also found several issues, such as non-flowing water, poor water quality, a lack of billing transparency, and slow responses to public complaints. This illustrates weak public service management, which should ideally be responsive, fair, and professional. In addition, a study by Aprilia (2021) on PDAM Unit Dampit also revealed customer complaints such as unstable water distribution, very low water pressure, and poor responsiveness in addressing complaints. These studies show that problems in PDAM's water services are recurring and widespread in various regions, thus requiring more serious attention.

Based on these studies, it is evident that the quality of PDAM services in various areas still falls short of expectations and has not yet met the ideal standards of public service. This highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive evaluation of the services provided by PDAM, including in Cianjur Regency. This research is essential, as water is a basic necessity that is vital for human life not only for consumption such as drinking and cooking, but also

for hygiene, health, and daily activities. Therefore, this study is important because it provides a deeper and more current overview of the service conditions of PDAM Tirta Mukti in Cianjur Regency. Furthermore, this research contributes to strengthening the relevance of the SERVQUAL theory as an analytical tool to measure public service quality, especially in the clean water supply sector, by identifying which service dimensions are still weak.

In Indonesia, the responsibility for clean water provision begins at the national level through government policy, which sets regulations and service standards, as stated in Law Number 17 of 2019 concerning Water Resources. The regional governments then carry out technical and operational management through Regional-Owned Enterprises (BUMD), namely PDAM. At the local level, PDAMs serve as the front line in distributing clean water to communities and handling technical issues and customer complaints. Thus, the quality of PDAM services becomes a key indicator in assessing the success of clean water policy implementation from the central to local levels.

PDAM Tirta Mukti plays an important role for the people of Cianjur Regency, especially those who rely on clean water for their daily needs. For residents who depend on groundwater wells but receive poor-quality water, the presence of PDAM helps ensure a safer and cleaner water supply. As a result, many residents in Cianjur Regency have come to rely on the services of PDAM Tirta Mukti. However, in practice, PDAM Tirta Mukti still faces various customer complaints. This is evident from 2023 data, which shows a monthly increase in the number of complaints submitted to PDAM Tirta Mukti. The following is the number of complaints received by PDAM Tirta Mukti:

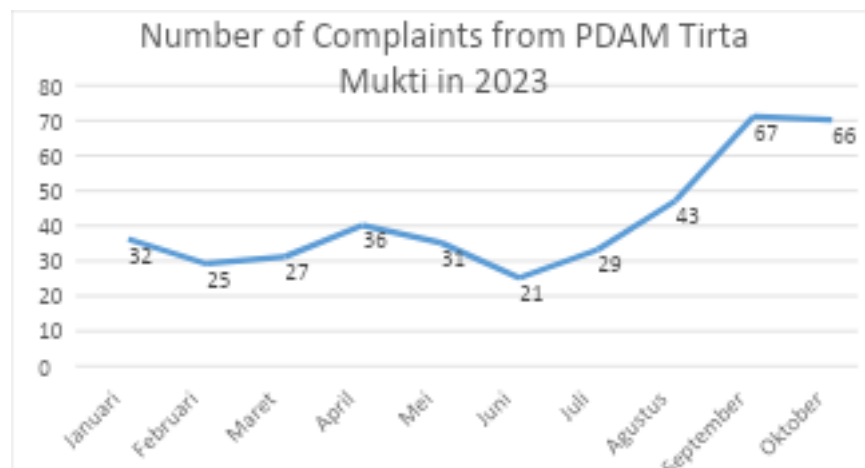


Figure 1
Number of Complaints at PDAM Tirta Mukti in 2023
(Source: PDAM Tirta Mukti Office, 2023)

The chart above illustrates the number of customer complaints received by PDAM Tirta Mukti throughout 2023. In general, the number of complaints fluctuated each month. The fewest complaints occurred in June, with a total of 21 cases, while the highest number was recorded in September, with 67 cases. After a steady increase starting in July, the number

of complaints remained high through October. This data indicates that service-related issues persisted and tended to worsen during the second half of the year.

According to the 2023 data, the Cianjur Branch recorded the highest number of complaints compared to other branches, with a total of 177 cases. This suggests that the Cianjur area is facing more serious service challenges, including issues related to water distribution, low water pressure, and delayed responses to customer complaints. This condition highlights the need for special attention and more optimal handling in the Cianjur Branch to improve the overall quality of service.

The following chart presents the number of complaints based on each branch:

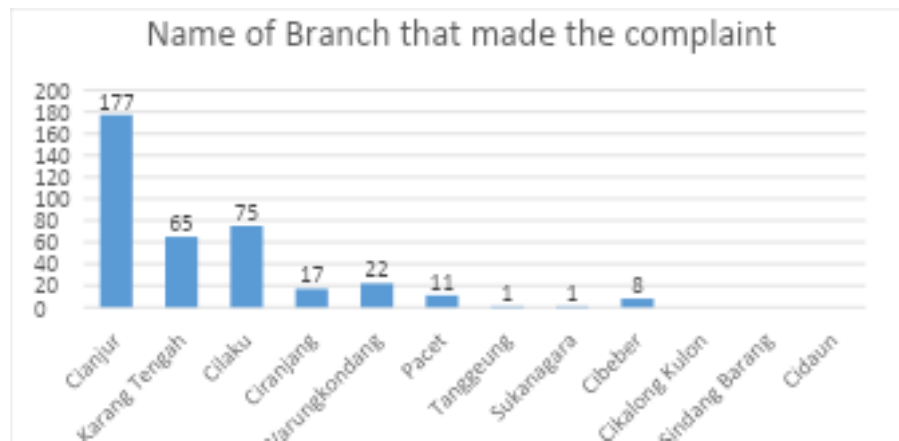


Figure 2
Branches Reporting the Highest Number of Complaints
(Source: PDAM Tirta Mukti Office, 2023)

Based on the chart above, among the various PDAM branches, the Cianjur Branch recorded the highest number of complaints, with a total of 177 cases. This condition indicates that the Cianjur Branch is facing more significant service issues compared to other branches. These issues may involve aspects such as inconsistent water distribution, inadequate pressure, and delays in responding to public complaints. Further service-related problems can also be identified through various electronic news sources. The following are some of the major issues reported:

Firstly, main pipeline damage has caused significant water service disruptions. Water flow from PDAM was obstructed due to serious damage to the aging main pipes. These damaged pipes, located in several critical areas including Panumbangan, Cibulakan, Rawa Cina, Rancapicung, and Cirumput, led to major supply interruptions. A similar incident occurred in Nagrak Village, where PDAM water did not flow for two consecutive days, disrupting the daily activities of the residents. (Sources: Radar Cianjur, 2023; Signal Cianjur, 2023)

Secondly, there are concerns about poor service quality. Many residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the inconsistent and inadequate water supply. For example,

residents of Gang Ikhlas in Limbangansari Village, Cianjur District, complained about the extremely low water pressure, which only flows at certain hours. Despite this, monthly billing continued at relatively high rates. The situation was even worse in Bojongherang Sub-district, where residents reported that water did not flow at all. Nonetheless, billing continued, and collection officers allegedly used coercive tactics, including intimidation and threats of service disconnection if payments were not made.

(Sources: Logika News, 2023; Bada News, 2023)

Thirdly, high billing and poor complaint response were also reported. In many cases, customers received high water bills despite irregular or non-functioning water supply. Moreover, customer complaints often received poor or delayed responses from the PDAM. (Source: Bada News, September 7, 2023)

Given these recurring issues, the researcher was motivated to conduct an in-depth analysis of the service quality of PDAM Tirta Mukti in Cianjur Regency, using the SERVQUAL model developed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry. This model consists of five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The study aims to measure and evaluate which dimensions of service are performing well and which ones require urgent improvement.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques included direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Informants were selected using a snowball sampling technique, consisting of customer relations staff, technical staff, and active customers of PDAM Tirta Mukti, Cianjur Regency. To increase data validity, triangulation techniques were used, both source triangulation and technical triangulation. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examines the service quality of the Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Tirta Mukti in Cianjur Regency based on the five SERVQUAL dimensions developed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990), namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings and discussion are as follows:

A. Tangibles

PDAM Tirta Mukti has provided adequate and comfortable physical facilities, such as air-conditioned service rooms, clean toilets, free Wi-Fi, and a representative waiting area.

These facilities not only support customer comfort but also enhance staff efficiency. The office's physical appearance, organized layout, and well-maintained service equipment create a professional image and boost public trust in PDAM. A good work environment also positively influences employee performance, increasing motivation and productivity in service delivery. These physical facilities reflect PDAM's commitment to providing the best quality services to the community. However, in terms of accessibility, customers still face difficulties accessing PDAM services, as many are unaware of online features such as checking bills via the website and still need to visit the PDAM office in person.

B. Reliability

In terms of reliability, PDAM Tirta Mukti has implemented regular technical monitoring systems, including checks on the Water Treatment Plant (WTP), water sources, and water meters. However, customers still report disruptions in water supply, especially during rainy or dry seasons, resulting in murky water or reduced water pressure. Complaints have also been made regarding billing inaccuracies. This indicates that despite internal systems being in place, external factors such as environmental conditions and a lack of public information dissemination hinder the perception of reliable service. To build greater customer trust, PDAM must improve distribution accuracy and ensure that clear information is delivered to all customers.

C. Responsiveness

PDAM has demonstrated willingness in handling customer complaints through complaint services and the provision of water tank trucks during service disruptions. This quick response is a positive indicator; however, there are still challenges regarding the speed of service. Some customers feel that services are delivered faster to those with personal connections to PDAM staff. Additionally, not all customers are aware of PDAM's digital communication channels, such as social media or the official website, leading to an information gap. PDAM needs to enhance communication initiatives and expand its information outreach to ensure equitable service delivery, regardless of personal relationships.

D. Assurance

The assurance dimension is considered optimal at PDAM Tirta Mukti. Staff display polite, friendly, and professional behavior, particularly when explaining technical procedures such as new connection installations and pipe repairs. Transparent and effective communication provides customers with a sense of security and trust. Moreover, the technical competence of the staff in delivering clear and detailed explanations strengthens customer confidence in the services provided. This dimension shows that PDAM not only focuses on technical aspects but also builds a strong foundation of trust through interpersonal interaction.

E. Empathy

The empathy dimension is also rated as optimal. This is reflected in the staff's friendliness, attentiveness, and responsiveness in handling customer complaints. PDAM actively responds to distribution disruptions by sending clean water via tanker trucks and

resolves complaints within a maximum of 24 hours. Technical staff also politely explain the causes of disruptions and apologize for any inconvenience. The staff's ability to understand customer situations and provide suitable solutions enhances customer trust and loyalty toward PDAM services. Harmonious and attentive customer relations serve as one of PDAM's key strengths in maintaining a positive public image.

The quality of service delivered by PDAM Tirta Mukti in Cianjur Regency indicates that the company has made significant efforts to meet most of the public's expectations, particularly in the assurance and empathy dimensions, which are considered optimal. Customers feel that they are treated respectfully, valued, and provided with helpful and solution-oriented communication. This has become a core strength for PDAM in maintaining customer trust and its service reputation. However, PDAM still needs to evaluate and improve its performance in the reliability and responsiveness dimensions, as these aspects are directly related to customer comfort in receiving daily services. Disruptions in water supply and delayed response times must be addressed more systematically by strengthening distribution management, promoting information access, and ensuring equitable service for all customers.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research on the service quality of PDAM Tirta Mukti in Cianjur Regency, which was analyzed using the five SERVQUAL dimensions, it can be concluded that PDAM has demonstrated fairly good performance in providing public services, although there are still several aspects that require improvement.

In the **tangible** dimension, physical facilities such as air-conditioned service rooms, clean toilets, free Wi-Fi, and comfortable waiting areas are adequate; however, access to digital information remains limited. In terms of **reliability**, PDAM has conducted technical monitoring, yet customers still report issues such as water supply disruptions and inaccurate billing. The **responsiveness** dimension shows an effort to address complaints, but service speed is inconsistent and influenced by personal connections, with limited public use of digital communication platforms. Meanwhile, the **assurance** and **empathy** dimensions are considered optimal, with staff demonstrating politeness, professionalism, and timely responses to service disruptions.

Overall, the service quality of PDAM Tirta Mukti is categorized as fairly good, particularly in the assurance and empathy dimensions. To achieve sustainable service excellence, PDAM needs to improve its reliability and responsiveness by enhancing distribution systems, speeding up response times, and strengthening digital communication—supported by strong commitment and an empathetic approach toward the community.

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