

Quality of Public Services at the Kupang City Fire Office in Overcoming Fires

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the quality of public services at the Kupang City Fire Office in addressing fires, examining how well the office meets the expectations and needs of the community. Public service, a core function of government bureaucracy, requires continuous adaptation to remain effective, efficient, competitive, adaptive, and responsive amidst changing societal demands. This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology, using observations, interviews, and documentation to gather data from both primary and secondary sources. The findings reveal that the Kupang City Fire Office faces significant challenges, including inadequate equipment and facilities, which hinder its ability to respond promptly and effectively to fire emergencies. Additionally, community feedback highlights dissatisfaction with the timeliness and quality of fire services. The study underscores the fire office's need to enhance its operational capabilities and align its services with public expectations. It emphasizes the importance of government accountability in providing satisfactory public services and the role of the fire office in increasing public awareness and preparedness for fire hazards. These findings suggest that improvements in infrastructure, personnel competence, and public engagement are essential for enhancing the quality of fire services in Kupang City.

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INTRODUCTION

Bureaucracy, as a public service function, plays an important role in fulfilling the basic needs and rights of every citizen. As a public organization, the bureaucracy continues to face environmental dynamics that require changes to be more effective, efficient, competitive, adaptive, and responsive in achieving its goals. These adjustments are essential to addressing society's evolving problems, demands, and aspirations (Hupe & Buffat, 2014).

Public services include various activities to meet citizens' basic needs. Public service agencies and officers, both at the central and local government levels, play an essential role in this regard. In accordance with the Decree of the Minister of Administrative Reform Number: Kep/25/M.Pan/2/2004, concerning General Guidelines for the Preparation of the Community Satisfaction Index, states that public services are expected to meet the needs of service recipients and carry out the provisions of laws and regulations properly.

However, the quality of public services currently still needs to be improved in order to meet public expectations. Various public complaints submitted through the mass media often reflect an unfavorable image of the government apparatus. Given that the primary function of government is to serve the community, continuous efforts are required to improve service quality. The public, as users of public services, has needs and expectations of the performance of professional public service providers. The task of the central and local governments today is to provide public services that satisfy the community (Gumah & Aziabah, 2020).

The implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy policies in Indonesia gives local governments the responsibility and authority to set minimum service standards. This means that each region, both cities and districts, must organize public services as well as possible in accordance with the minimum standards that have been set. Measuring the performance of public services can be done through two approaches, namely, from the perspective of service providers and the perspective of service users. Public services are understood as providing services to individuals or communities with an interest in the organization according to established rules and procedures (Thamrin et al., 2024).

As the capital of East Nusa Tenggara Province, Kupang City is the center of economic development and significant business activities. This is evident in the construction of new high-rise buildings, schools, universities, offices, hotels, and residential areas. Kupang has also attracted people from other areas looking for work, resulting in a rapid increase in population and economic activity. One of the impacts of this growth is the low level of public awareness of fire hazards. Fires are unpredictable disasters, so firefighters must always be on standby for 24 hours to respond to information related to fire disasters.

Every fire incident must be evaluated to improve the effectiveness of handling. The Fire Department (Damkar), with the motto "Never go home before extinguishing" and the nickname "blue

satria," faces various challenges in the field. Challenges that are often faced include the partially inadequate physical condition of firefighting vehicles, limited supporting facilities such as uniforms, and a lack of competent personnel. Public complaints about the slow response of fire trucks are an indication that the services provided are still inadequate (Rairutu, 2024).

This study aims to assess the quality of public services at the Kupang City Fire Department in an effort to improve an effective and efficient fire prevention and handling system. It seeks to identify gaps between the services provided and those expected by the community, as well as provide concrete recommendations for improvement. Thus, it is hoped that the Kupang Fire Department can improve its public services and build public awareness and vigilance against fire hazards.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Service Quality

The definition of service quality centers on efforts to meet the needs and desires of customers and the accuracy of their delivery to balance customer expectations. Tjiptono (2008) defines service quality as "the level of excellence expected and control over that level of excellence to meet customer desires". On other hand, service quality is as a reflection of consumers' evaluative perceptions of the service received at a certain time (Ilmi & Zulkarnain).

Dimensi Kualitas Pelayanan

a. Physical Evidence (tangibles)

Physical evidence (tangibles), including physical facilities, equipment, employees and means of communication. According to Lupiyoadi and Hamdani (2006) physical evidence (tangibles) is the ability of a company to show its existence to external parties. The appearance and ability of the company's reliable physical facilities and infrastructure as well as the state of the surrounding environment is one way service companies present service quality to customers. The indicators used in the study are Modern equipment that supports. (b). Appearance of the place

b. Reliability

According to Tjiptono & Chandra (2016) Reliability is the ability to provide the promised service immediately, accurately and satisfactorily. Speed is an ability to serve quickly which refers to customer satisfaction.

c. Assurance

Assurance, includes the knowledge, competence, courtesy, and trustworthiness of the staff, free from danger, risk or doubt. According to Lupiyoadi and Hamdani (2006) assurance is the knowledge, courtesy and ability of company employees to foster consumer confidence in the company.

d. Responsiveness

According to Lupiyoadi (2006) responsiveness is the ability to help and provide fast and precise service to customers with clear information delivery. Letting customers wait without a clear reason causes a negative perception in service quality.

e. Empathy

According to Tjiptono (2011) empathy is the ease of making relationships, good communication, personal attention and understanding the needs of customers. Besides, empathy is the provision of personal care and attention to consumers such as working hours, attention in service, making consumers interested in the company, attention to consumers and consumer needs (Ardiputra & Prawira, 2020).

Firefighter

Firefighting is a profession that has the task of tackling and extinguishing fire disasters in a district / city. More broadly, firefighters can also carry out rescue and disaster management or other unexpected events that harm the community (Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government).

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive qualitative study deals with the quality of service of the Kupang City Fire Office (Damkar) towards the satisfaction of the people of Kupang City. Qualitative research methods are used to research natural object conditions with researchers as key instruments (Sugiyono, 2011). Primary data is the leading data regarding respondents' responses about Kupang City Fire Office services. Secondary data includes the general condition of the Kupang City Fire Office, services that can be performed and others. Primary data is sourced from the results of filling out questionnaires and interviews with respondents, and secondary data is obtained through documents, literature, and relevant journals. The primary data sources in qualitative research are words and actions; the rest are additional data (Moelong, 2017). Data collection techniques used are interviews, observations and documentary studies. Data analysis techniques use qualitative descriptive analysis techniques with activities in data analysis, namely reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusions. Data validity checking techniques with data credibility/degree of trustworthiness criteria, dependability audits, and certainty audits.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Quality of Public Services at the Kupang City Fire Office

The study aims to assess the quality of public services at the Kupang City Fire Department by evaluating its performance, identifying gaps between provided and expected services, and recommending strategies for improvement. This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings based on the survey data, interviews, and observational studies conducted as part of the

research.

Service Quality Assessment

The quality of service provided by the Kupang City Fire Department was evaluated across several dimensions: responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. Each of these dimensions plays a critical role in determining the overall effectiveness of the Fire Department's operations and its ability to meet community needs.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the ability of the Fire Department to react to fire incidents promptly. The study revealed that the average response time was approximately 20 minutes, which is significantly longer than the ideal response time of 10 minutes as established by local government standards. This delay is primarily attributed to several factors, including traffic congestion, inadequate road infrastructure, and the geographical spread of fire incidents across the city.

The delay in response times is more pronounced in areas that are further from the central fire station. Urban expansion in Kupang has led to the development of new residential and commercial areas, some located in regions with limited accessibility. As a result, fire trucks often encounter difficulties in navigating through congested and narrow streets, especially during peak hours. This challenge underscores the need for strategic planning in the placement of additional fire stations, particularly in high-risk areas. Furthermore, leveraging technology to enhance dispatch systems and navigation tools can aid in optimizing response routes and reducing delays.

Reliability

Reliability measures the consistency and dependability of the fire services. The survey results indicated that while 70% of respondents viewed the fire services as generally reliable, there were notable concerns regarding equipment failure and inadequate water supply at fire scenes. The reliability of the Fire Department is compromised by outdated firefighting equipment, which is often prone to breakdowns and malfunctions.

The observational study highlighted that many fire trucks and equipment have exceeded their optimal operational lifespan, leading to frequent mechanical issues. Moreover, the lack of an adequate water supply during fire emergencies is a recurrent problem exacerbated by insufficient hydrant infrastructure and maintenance. To address these issues, it is essential for the local government to prioritize investment in modern firefighting equipment and the expansion of hydrant networks. Additionally, implementing regular maintenance schedules and inspections can ensure that existing resources remain in good working condition, thereby enhancing the reliability of the fire services.

Assurance

Assurance involves the competence, courtesy, and credibility of the fire personnel, which in turn instills confidence and trust in the community. The majority of respondents expressed high levels of trust in the firefighters' skills and dedication. However, there were concerns regarding the adequacy of training programs and the limited number of personnel available to handle large-scale incidents.

Fire personnel are generally perceived as skilled and committed. However, there is a pressing need for ongoing training and development to keep pace with advancements in firefighting techniques and technology. Regular drills, simulations, and professional development courses can equip firefighters with the necessary skills to respond effectively to a wide range of fire scenarios. Furthermore, increasing the recruitment and retention of competent personnel can alleviate the burden on existing staff and improve the overall capacity of the Fire Department.

Empathy

Empathy measures the extent to which the Fire Department is perceived as caring and attentive to the needs of the community. The survey findings revealed mixed perceptions, with some residents appreciating the firefighters' dedication and willingness to help. In contrast, others felt neglected, especially during large-scale incidents where resources were stretched thin.

The fire department should enhance its community engagement and outreach efforts to improve empathy and build stronger relationships with the community. By actively engaging with residents, listening to their concerns, and involving them in fire safety initiatives, the Department can foster a sense of partnership and mutual understanding. Additionally, public education campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the challenges faced by the Fire Department can help manage expectations and garner community support.

Infrastructure and Resources

The physical infrastructure and resources available to the Kupang City Fire Department play a pivotal role in determining its effectiveness in responding to fire emergencies. The study identified several critical deficiencies in this area, which significantly impact the Department's ability to deliver timely and effective services.

One of the most pressing issues is the outdated condition of firefighting vehicles and equipment. Many fire trucks are in poor condition, lacking the necessary modern features that enhance efficiency and safety. The inadequacy of protective gear, such as fire-resistant clothing and breathing apparatus, further hampers the firefighters' ability to operate safely and effectively in hazardous conditions.

Addressing these infrastructure challenges requires a concerted effort from the local

government to allocate sufficient budgetary resources for the procurement of new firefighting equipment and vehicles. Additionally, exploring public-private partnerships could provide an avenue for securing additional funding and resources. Such collaborations can bring innovative solutions and technologies that enhance the Fire Department's operational capabilities.

Public Awareness and Preparedness

Public awareness of fire hazards and preparedness for fire emergencies are critical components of effective fire prevention and management. The study's findings indicated a general lack of awareness and preparedness among the residents of Kupang City. Many respondents were unaware of essential fire safety measures, evacuation procedures, and the importance of having emergency plans in place.

To address this gap, the Fire Department should implement comprehensive community outreach programs focused on educating the public about fire safety and prevention. Conducting workshops, seminars, and fire drills in schools, workplaces, and residential areas can instill a culture of awareness and preparedness. Collaborating with local educational institutions and community organizations can further amplify these efforts and reach a broader audience.

Increasing public awareness and preparedness not only enhances individual and community safety but also reduces the burden on the Fire Department by minimizing the occurrence and impact of fire incidents. An informed and prepared public is better equipped to take proactive measures in preventing fires and responding effectively when emergencies occur.

Improving Communication and Community Relations

Building solid relationships with the community is essential for the effective delivery of public services. The study highlighted the need for the Kupang City Fire Department to improve its communication strategies and community relations. Enhancing transparency, openness, and accessibility in interactions with the public can build trust and foster a positive image of the Fire Department.

To achieve this, the Fire Department should establish regular communication channels with the community, such as public forums, social media platforms, and informational newsletters. These channels can provide updates on fire safety initiatives, share success stories, and address community concerns. Additionally, involving the community in decision-making processes related to fire safety initiatives can empower residents and create a sense of ownership and responsibility for fire prevention efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has comprehensively assessed the quality of public services provided by the Kupang City Fire Department, identifying significant areas of strength as well as critical challenges that hinder optimal service delivery. The analysis focused on key dimensions of service quality, including responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, infrastructure, and public awareness. The findings reveal that while the Kupang City Fire Department is dedicated to serving the community, several challenges need to be addressed to enhance its effectiveness. Delays in response times, mainly due to traffic congestion and limited infrastructure, highlight the need for strategic planning in station placement and improved dispatch systems. Additionally, outdated equipment and insufficient water supply compromise service reliability, necessitating urgent investment in modern firefighting resources.

The competence and dedication of the fire personnel are commendable; however, ongoing training and an increase in staffing levels are essential to meet the demands of large-scale emergencies. Furthermore, enhancing community engagement and empathy through public outreach initiatives can strengthen the relationship between the Fire Department and the residents it serves. Public awareness of fire hazards remains low, underscoring the importance of educational programs that promote fire safety and preparedness. By fostering a culture of awareness, the community can become more proactive in preventing and responding to fire incidents. Improving communication and community relations is critical for building trust and transparency between the Fire Department and the public. Establishing open communication channels and involving residents in fire safety decision-making can create a sense of partnership and shared responsibility.

In conclusion, addressing the identified challenges and implementing targeted improvements can significantly enhance the Kupang City Fire Department's capacity to prevent and manage fire emergencies effectively. By prioritizing investments in infrastructure, training, and community outreach, the Department can build a safer, more resilient community. The insights and recommendations from this study provide a roadmap for strengthening the quality of public services and ensuring that the Kupang City Fire Department meets the evolving needs and expectations of the community it serves. Through collaborative efforts and a commitment to continuous improvement, the Fire Department can play a pivotal role in safeguarding the lives and properties of Kupang City residents.

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