

Critical Dynamics of Lemito Village Apparatus' Behavior in Public Services in Pohuwato Regency

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Abstract. *This research aims to analyze the dynamics of the behavior of officials in Lemito Village in public services in Pohuwato Regency, with a focus on four key indicators: Responding to Service Recipients, Maintaining Effective Communication, Taking Responsibility, and Acting for Customers. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentary studies. Theories of public management, community participation, organizational communication, and total quality management were integrated to form the conceptual framework of the research. The research findings indicate that the behavior of officials in Lemito Village still has weaknesses in responding quickly to the needs of the community, maintaining effective communication, taking active responsibility, and acting proactively to meet customer expectations. These findings reflect suboptimal public services influenced by several factors, including a lack of training, communication barriers, and a lack of community participation in decision-making. The conclusion of the research emphasizes that improvements in the behavior of officials in Lemito Village will contribute to the enhancement of the quality of public services, creating better relationships between village officials and the community, and promoting the achievement of development goals at the local level. Recommendations include the need for regular training to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of village officials, the development of intercultural communication skills, local empowerment through community participation in decision-making processes, and the introduction of a reward system to encourage responsibility and proactive initiatives.*

Keywords: *Behavior Dynamics, Village Officials, Public Services*

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INTRODUCTION

Lemito Village, located in Pohuwato Regency, is a local government entity that plays a central role in providing public services to its community. Public services at the village level are the core in meeting basic needs and supporting community development. Therefore, a deep understanding of the dynamics of village officials' behavior in providing public services is a necessity to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out their duties. The main focus is criticality in the behavior of village officials, considering that quality public services do not only depend on technical competence, but also involve aspects such as community participation, effective communication, quality management, and customer orientation. The high expectations of the community regarding the quality of service require that village officials not only act as executors of their duties, but also as leaders who facilitate the needs and aspirations of their residents. At the national level, these concepts have been debated and developed by experts and thinkers in public management theory, community participation, organizational communication, and total quality management. For example, Panday & Chowdhury (2020) in "The Spirit of Public Administration" discusses the principles of public management, including responsibility and

initiative, while Arnstein (1969) with the concept of participation ladder provides a framework for understanding public participation.

Organizational communication theory by Van Ruler (2020) and Falkheimer & Heide (2018) emphasizes the importance of effective communication. Parasuraman et al. (1985) in the concept of total quality management leads to the understanding that good service must meet people's expectations and satisfaction. However, facing the reality and complexity of Lemito Village, where local values, culture and traditions influence the dynamics of public services, it is necessary to integrate national theories with unique local concepts.

Therefore, the background of this research tries to identify how the theories of public management, community participation, organizational communication, and total quality management can be enriched and adapted to the local context of Lemito Village. This research aims to bring a deeper understanding of how the behavior of village officials can be criticized and improved according to the needs and characteristics of local communities, while contributing to the development of theory and practice of public service management at the local level.

Sober (2020) and Taylor (2021) reviews the use of the terms moral and behavior from two different traditions of philosophical thought. The term moral is associated with the philosophical thought tradition of Immanuel Kant, who adopted a deontological perspective. Likewise, according to Prakash (2019) and Bungatang & Reynel (2021), behavior in service performance has four aspects, namely responding to service recipients, maintaining good communication, and making decisions. Public services have a strategic role as one of the government functions, apart from regulation and empowerment. Public services are considered as a system in which the public as applicants or service users must have broad access to the process of problem solving and decision making in the delivery of public services. The principle of openness plays an important role in the formation of quality public services (Lapiente & Van de Walle, 2020; Ferlie & Ongaro, 2022).

Hardiansyah (2011), public service is defined as "providing services (serving) the needs of people or society who have an interest in certain organizations in accordance with the basic rules and procedures that have been determined." Based on the General Guidelines for Bureaucratic Reform as explained in the Regulation of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform Number PER/15/M.PAN/7/2008, the specific aim is to create a bureaucracy that is transparent (open) and capable of providing excellent service to the community. The general target of Bureaucratic Reform is a change in mindset, work culture and government management system, in research by Maulana et al. (2022) and Munawwaroh et al. (2019). Therefore, efforts to realize openness in the delivery of public services are a necessity to carry out public services that are open, accountable, effective and non-discriminatory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Management Theory

Exploring the basic principles of public management theory, especially the focus on responsibility and initiative, is crucial in understanding the dynamics of the apparatus. Frederickson (1997) in his work "The Spirit of Public Administration" provides an in-depth foundation, while the "New Public Service" theory by Denhardt and Denhardt (2017) provides a new perspective by emphasizing the importance of public services that are holistic and oriented towards social and environmental justice. The integration of these theories not only enriches understanding of the role of officials in public management, but also creates a strong foundation for looking further into the dynamics of their behavior. Thus, the introduction of this supporting theory amplifies our insight into the efforts of officials in advancing the principles of public management, forming a solid foundation for an in-depth understanding of the complexity of their tasks (Haider et al., 2019; Klemsdal et al., 2022).

Community Participation and Involvement in Decision Making

The basic principles of public management theory, especially around responsibility and initiative, are a critical step in understanding the role of the apparatus. In his work "The Spirit of Public Administration" (1997), Frederickson asserts a deep foundation, explaining the essence of successful public management. Meanwhile, the "New Public Service" theory by Denhardt and Denhardt (2017) presents a revolutionary perspective by highlighting the importance of holistic public services, focusing on social and environmental justice. According to Asaduzzaman & Virtanen (2023) and Sønderskov & Rønning (2021), the combination of these two theories not only enriches the view of the role of officials in public management, but also forms a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of their behavior. The introduction of this theory amplifies our understanding of officials' efforts to advance the principles of public management, providing a strong basis for further exploration of the complexities and challenges faced in their duties.

Organizational Communication and Public Services

Organizational communication, Berlo (1960) shows the importance of understanding communication as a basic element in relationships between individuals. The basic concept, known as Berlo's model of communication, details elements such as source, message, channel, receiver, and effect, forming the basis for understanding communicative interaction. The importance of organizational communication in the context of public services is further strengthened by the "Communication Accommodation Theory" by Giles and Coupland (1991). This theory broadens our view by emphasizing how communication can be accommodated to increase the effectiveness of interactions. In the context of the apparatus, the ability to adapt communication to various groups of society is key. According to Giles and Coupland (1991) communication adjustments play a crucial role in building more effective relationships and promoting public engagement. By understanding and accommodating the different communication styles of society, officials can create a communication climate that is conducive to effective public services. It's not just about sending messages, but also about how those messages are received and understood by different groups in society.

Total Quality Management, Customer Orientation and Community Satisfaction

Total quality management and customer orientation, through the key contributions of Parasuraman et al. (1985), opens up important avenues in understanding the significance of service quality in the service context. Their primary focus on customer perceptions of service quality forms the basis of management strategies aimed at meeting customer expectations and needs. Further development can be done through the integration of the "Service-Dominant Logic" theory by Vargo and Lusch (2004). This theory emphasizes that value is created through interactions between service providers and consumers, highlighting the role of customers as active partners in the value process. By incorporating this perspective, total quality management focuses not only on internal controls, but also on customer involvement as a critical element in improving service quality. Meanwhile, "Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory" by Oliver (1980) brings a psychological dimension to the understanding of customer satisfaction. This theory highlights that satisfaction arises from a comparison between expectations before the service is provided and perceptions after the service experience. By incorporating this concept, we can see how officers who have critical behavior can influence not only the quality of service but also how customer expectations and perceptions interact with each other. It is important to consider that critical officer behaviors, which may include responsiveness, emotional intelligence, and positive attitudes, can directly influence service quality and community satisfaction. Thus, this perspective provides a basis for a more in-depth analysis of how interactions between officials and customers can shape public perceptions of the overall quality of public services.

METHODS

This research was directed by a qualitative approach, a research method that focuses on in-depth understanding of social phenomena. This approach allows researchers to explore and gain in-depth insight into the behavior of Lemito Village officials in the context of public services. By relying on direct observation methods, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, this research aims to investigate and explore the meaning behind the interactions of village officials with the community. The use of a qualitative approach provides the freedom to detail the complex dimensions of the daily interactions of Lemito Village officials with the community. Data was collected through observation techniques that pay attention to direct interactions, interviews with main stakeholders such as the Village Head, Village Secretary and other village officials, as well as through document analysis related to public service policies and procedures. The qualitative data analysis process includes categorization, grouping, and in-depth interpretation to detail the findings that emerge from the data. Choosing a qualitative approach not only provides flexibility in exploring the behavioral dynamics of Lemito Village officials, but also opens up opportunities to identify contextual factors that shape their interactions in providing public services to the community. By focusing on deeper and more contextual understanding, the qualitative approach is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the critical dynamics of the behavior of Lemito Village officials in public services in Pohuwato Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respond to Service Recipients

Although Lemito Village officials have demonstrated positive responsiveness to community needs, research findings highlight the need for improvement in terms of speed and consistency of response to residents' requests. The existence of situations where the response to a particular need is less than optimal indicates the need for the development of additional strategies or training, such as improving protocols or focusing training on handling requests more efficiently, forming the basis for a more responsive service. In Community Participation theory, Arnstein (1969) provides an important basis for explaining that the critical behavior of Lemito Village officials in responding to service recipients can be linked to the level of active community participation in the decision-making process. Arnstein stated that real public participation occurs when they have true power to influence policies and decisions. By referring to this theory, we can understand that increasing community participation in public services can be influenced by the responsiveness of village officials.

Furthermore, Halik et al. (2022) and Haming et al. (2022) provides additional understanding of how the critical behavior of Lemito Village officials can increase community participation in the public service process. Halik et al. (2022), through the concept of "deliberative democracy," emphasizes the importance of involving society in discussions and decision making. By considering this theory, the critical behavior of village officials can be interpreted as an effort to encourage active and constructive participation from the community, creating a stronger basis for responsive active and democratic public services. Along with these findings, strategic steps can be implemented to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of public services in Lemito Village. These efforts may include ongoing training, refinement of response protocols, and a more inclusive approach to community participation. Thus, this research not only presents a critical picture of the current state of affairs but also provides a basis for the development of more progressive policies, supporting a vision of public services that are more interactive and involve the community substantially.

Maintain Good Communication

Although Lemito Village officials have tried to keep communication channels open, the research findings underscore the urgency of increasing communication effectiveness. These corrective steps can include clarifying the information conveyed to the public, using more efficient communication media, and even holding regular dialogue forums. All of these efforts are

carried out with the aim of ensuring that information related to public services can be accessed and well understood by citizens.

The Organizational Communication Theory put forward by Al-Rasyid (2018) is the main foundation for understanding the importance of effective communication in the context of Lemito Village officials. Al-Rasyid model highlights that successful communication involves conveying a clear message and good understanding on the part of the recipient. An addition to the understanding of effective communication comes from the Transactional Communication Concept developed by Berlo (1960). This theory emphasizes that communication involves the exchange of messages between communicating parties, emphasizing that listening and responding well is an integral part of an effective transactional communication process in the context of the behavior of Lemito Village officials.

Take Responsibility

Even though Lemito Village village officials have demonstrated a positive level of responsibility, several aspects still require optimization. The development of responsibility management, especially in dealing with complex or urgent situations, may involve additional training or the implementation of more structured procedures. Encouraging proactive initiatives to respond to challenges that may arise can be key to increasing efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

If we review taking responsibility from the perspective of Frederickson (1997) in Public Management Theory, we can detail that the behavior of Lemito Village officials reflects public management principles which emphasize individual responsibility in achieving organizational goals. Frederickson specifically highlights the importance of initiative and responsibility in the context of the public management environment. Bass & Riggio's (2006) Transformational Leadership Theory provides reinforcement related to understanding the behavior of Lemito Village officials in taking responsibility, emphasizing elements of transformational leadership. In this context, transformational leadership emphasizes the importance of motivating subordinates to achieve higher goals and take initiative independently. Therefore, the proactive behavior of village officials can be interpreted as a form of transformational leadership.

Optimizing responsibility taking may involve improvements in emergency situation management or additional training in dealing with the complexity of their duties (Ahsan et al., 2019; Guo & Zhang, 2022). Proactive initiatives, especially in dealing with challenges that may arise, will not only increase the productivity of village officials but also create an environment that is responsive to community needs. By detailing the theoretical perspectives of Frederickson and Bass & Riggio, we can see that Lemito Village officials can utilize the principles of public management and transformational leadership to improve their responsibility-taking practices. This will not only optimize the performance of village officials in carrying out their responsibilities but can also create a greater positive impact on public services and the welfare of local communities.

Act for Customers

Although village officials have acted proactively to meet customer needs, research highlights that there is still potential for further innovation in responding to needs that may not have been optimally met. More targeted strategies for identifying and resolving customer problems, perhaps through feedback mechanisms or satisfaction surveys, could be an effective measure to increase public satisfaction. Implementing new practices that emphasize customer engagement can also be an effective solution. The concept of Customer Orientation in Total Quality Management pioneered by Parasuraman et al. (1985) can help explain that the proactive behavior of Lemito Village officials in meeting community needs reflects a focus on customer satisfaction. Parasuraman et al. identified that successful organizations are those that focus on understanding and meeting customer needs.

This concept can also be strengthened by Oliver's (1980) theory through the Customer Satisfaction Theory which provides an additional perspective related to how the behavior of Lemito Village officials in acting for customers can influence community satisfaction. Oliver suggested that customer satisfaction is related to their perception of results and expectations. By applying this theory, the proactive behavior of village officials can be linked to increasing customer satisfaction through fulfilling their needs and expectations. Thus, a focus on customer satisfaction not only creates the possibility of further innovation in public services but also strengthens the involvement of village officials in understanding and meeting community needs, leading to an overall improvement in service quality and positive relationships with residents.

CONCLUSION

This research describes the dynamics of behavior of Lemito Village officials in the context of public services in Pohuwato Regency. Findings show that while officers' responsiveness to community needs can be identified, there are opportunities to improve speed and consistency in responding to citizen requests. Although communication between village officials and the community is kept open, there is potential to increase the effectiveness of communication. Although village officials demonstrate a positive level of responsibility, there is potential for development in responsibility management, especially in dealing with complex situations. Although acting proactively for customers is a strength, further innovation is needed to respond to needs that have not been optimally met. In conclusion, the recommendations from this research can be a basis for increasing the effectiveness of public services at the village level and strengthening relationships between village officials and residents. To improve the optimality of public services, regular training needs to be held that focuses on increasing the responsiveness and effectiveness of village officials to community needs. Strengthening communication skills, through intercultural training and the application of local languages, is expected to overcome identified communication barriers. Local empowerment needs to be increased through promoting the active participation of village officials in decision processes that affect the community. To increase responsibility and proactive initiative, a reward and recognition system can be introduced that encourages village officials to achieve optimal performance. By implementing these suggestions, it is hoped that the behavior of Lemito Village officials can experience significant improvement, encouraging public services that are more optimal and responsive to the needs of the local community.

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