

Improving the Quality of Public Services in the District Government of Kutai Kartanegara Regency (Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities in Welcoming the Presence of the New Capital City)

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Abstract

Abstract: *Quality public services are the main foundation for realizing effective governance that is oriented towards the interests of the community. This study aims to analyze the quality and reform of public services in five sub-districts in Kutai Kartanegara Regency: Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu. The urgency of this research lies in the need to strengthen the accountability and professionalism of civil servants amidst public demands for fast, transparent, and technology-based services. Using a qualitative approach supported by quantitative data, this study examines the implementation of ethics, standards, principles, and supervision of public services through a survey of civil servants and the community. The results show that all sub-districts are in the good to very good category with an average score of 74–83%. Kenohan Sub-district obtained the highest score (83%) in the reform and supervision aspects, while Loa Kulu and Loa Janan showed the lowest scores, indicating the need to improve facilities and capacity of civil servants. This study emphasizes the importance of strengthening human resource capacity, digitizing services, and inter-agency collaboration to realize professional, accountable, and sustainable public services.*

Abstract: Pelayanan publik yang berkualitas merupakan fondasi utama dalam mewujudkan tata kelola pemerintahan yang efektif dan berorientasi pada kepentingan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kualitas dan reformasi pelayanan publik pada lima kecamatan di Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara, yaitu Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, dan Loa Kulu. Urgensi penelitian ini terletak pada kebutuhan untuk memperkuat akuntabilitas dan profesionalisme aparatur di tengah tuntutan masyarakat terhadap layanan yang cepat, transparan, dan berbasis teknologi. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan dukungan data kuantitatif, penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi etika, standar, prinsip, dan pengawasan pelayanan publik melalui survei terhadap aparatur dan masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seluruh kecamatan berada pada kategori baik hingga sangat baik dengan rata-rata skor 74–83%. Kecamatan Kenohan memperoleh nilai tertinggi (83%) pada aspek reformasi dan pengawasan, sedangkan Loa Kulu dan Loa Janan menunjukkan skor terendah yang menandakan perlunya peningkatan sarana dan kapasitas aparatur. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan kapasitas SDM, digitalisasi layanan, serta kolaborasi antarinstansi untuk mewujudkan pelayanan publik yang profesional, akuntabel, dan berkelanjutan.

Introduction

The government essentially has a primary obligation to provide good public services to the community. This is a direct mandate of the constitution and reinforced by Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services. This law emphasizes that the state is obligated to serve every citizen and resident in order to fulfill their basic rights and needs (Futum Hubaib, Jamil Bazarah, Ahmad Jubaidi, 2021; Rozi, 2022). The public services referred to are not only limited to the provision of administrative services, but also include public goods and public services related to aspects of people's daily lives, including education, teaching, work, business (Fitri, 2024), housing, communication (Marwan, 2024), and information, health, the environment, energy, social security, banking, tourism, transportation, natural resources, and other strategic sectors. Thus, public services occupy a vital position as a bridge between the state and the people, while also being an indicator of the quality of government in carrying out its administrative functions (Skålén & Trischler, 2024; Virtanen & Jalonon, 2023).

The quality of public services is a benchmark for the public in assessing government performance. As stated Lestari & Santoso, (2022) the quality of public administration is reflected in the extent to which public services are able to meet the needs and expectations of the community. Therefore, the government is required to provide quality, transparent, fair, and accountable services (Titania, 2023) to support this, Law Number 25 of 2009 also mandates the role of the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman as an external supervisory institution for the implementation of public services. Titania (2023) regularly conduct compliance surveys of ministries, institutions and local governments to measure the extent of their compliance with service standards set out in the law (Titania, 2023) this assessment is conducted independently, without notification, by examining physical and procedural aspects, as well as consistency in service quality.

However, despite clear regulations and existing oversight bodies, the reality of public services in Indonesia still faces various challenges. Titania reports (2023) the study showed various forms of irregularities in public services. For example, in the health sector, procedural irregularities were found at 38%, non-service provision at 24%, prolonged delays at 17%, inappropriate service at 5%, and other problems at 15%. Meanwhile, in the immigration sector, 26% of public reports stated that they received no service at all, 13% experienced delays, 9% faced procedural irregularities, 9% experienced inappropriate service, and the remaining 43% had other problems. In the settlement and housing sector, prolonged delays reached 47%, procedural irregularities at 30%, incompetent service at 10%, and other problems at 13%. These data show that public services are still far from satisfactory. The study Anna Kormpaulun & Melayaman, (2021) also strengthens these findings by highlighting various problems such as the lack of response from officials to public complaints, delays in delivering information, difficulty in public access to services due to distance, overlapping policies, complicated administrative requirements, and service costs that are considered expensive.

This situation demonstrates that public services remain a serious challenge that must be addressed. It's no surprise that public services are a key focus of the bureaucratic reform agenda. Bureaucratic reform itself is a strategic step to improve the quality of governance and the performance of state officials (Aswin Maysura, 2025) Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning

State Civil Apparatus, which replaces Law Number 43 of 1999 concerning the Principles of Civil Service, emphasizes the importance of strengthening the capacity of civil servants in order to improve the quality of public services (Prasetia, 2019) the expected bureaucratic criteria include neutrality, professionalism, transparency, freedom from corrupt, collusion and nepotism practices, and functioning as a glue for national unity (Zulyani, 2020) a neutral bureaucratic apparatus means providing services without political discrimination; reliable, meaning having the competencies appropriate to its duties; efficient and effective, meaning able to work optimally with available resources; and transparent by providing access to public information. Thus, bureaucratic reform is aimed at strengthening the integrity, accountability, and responsiveness of the apparatus to the needs of the community (Amir & Hertanto, 2023).

Various studies show that the weaknesses of Indonesian bureaucracy still lie in the aspects of efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and equal treatment of the public (Cahya et al., 2025) public services are often unresponsive because public complaints are ignored or handled slowly (Siswadhi, 2020) information that should be easily accessible often reaches the public slowly. Difficulty accessing service locations also presents a barrier, compounded by poor coordination between service units, resulting in overlapping policies. Furthermore, complicated and bureaucratic service procedures require the public to navigate through various lengthy processes. Officials are also perceived as not being open to public complaints and tending to maintain old methods without improvement. These various conditions indicate fundamental problems in bureaucratic governance, including low levels of professionalism (Zakki Arifin & Zainal Abidin, 2019). Study Zulyani, (2020) he even emphasized that the low quality of public services in Indonesia is caused by a lack of professionalism among the apparatus, rampant corruption, weak effectiveness, and the continuation of a patrimonial bureaucracy. In line with this, Aditya Ari Nugroho et al. (2021) stated that the main issue of bureaucratic reform during President Joko Widodo's administration was the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic performance.

Awareness of these bureaucratic problems has prompted the government to make various breakthroughs. In his inaugural address on October 20, 2019, President Joko Widodo emphasized the importance of bureaucratic simplification as part of structural reform (Kementrian PANRB, 2019) this bureaucratic simplification concept aims to cut down on lengthy administrative processes, focus positions on functional roles according to expertise, and speed up the communication and decision-making process (Amantha, 2024) bureaucratic transformation is expected to make the organizational structure leaner, more flexible, and more adaptive to the needs of society. Ristala et al. (2023) emphasized that bureaucratic simplification is not only a regulatory mandate, but also a pressing public demand for fast, simple and efficient public services.

Furthermore, Ristala (2023) explains that bureaucratic reform is an instrument to restore public trust by creating professional, accountable, and transparent governance. The quality of human resources (HR) is the main key in realizing the objectives of this reform. State apparatus must be professional, have integrity, and have high competitiveness. Through the implementation of a merit system, the appointment and promotion of ASN are carried out based on qualifications, competency, and performance, thereby avoiding the practice of nepotism. This is in line with the Regulation of the Minister of PAN-RB Number 25 of 2020

concerning the Road Map for Bureaucratic Reform 2020–2024, which emphasizes the need for a merit system as a basis for improving bureaucratic performance. Meanwhile, in Presidential Regulation Number 81 of 2010 concerning the Grand Design for Bureaucratic Reform 2010–2025, the grand vision is to realize a world-class government supported by professional apparatus at all levels. Thus, bureaucratic reform is not just discourse, but an urgent need to improve governance for the better.

In addition to the central level, public services are also crucial at the local level, particularly in villages, sub-districts, and districts. These government units are the spearheads in providing direct services to the public. However, basic services in villages still face various obstacles. Larisu (2022) highlighted issues such as low community participation, limited accurate data, weak budget support, inadequate infrastructure, weak social accountability, and limited mechanisms for reaching the poor. In this context, sub-districts play a strategic role because they function as regional apparatus organizations (OPD) with attributive and delegative duties from the regent or mayor. Sub-district heads are responsible for coordinating community empowerment, maintaining public service facilities, and fostering and supervising village activities. With their strategic position, sub-districts serve as a bridge between district/city governments and villages and urban villages. Therefore, the role of sub-districts is crucial in accelerating access to basic services and supporting village development achievements.

Various previous studies have shown that there are still many weaknesses in public services at the local level (2021), found that services at the Dumai City Sub-district Head's office still face problems with inadequate infrastructure, staff who are not yet skilled in using assistive devices, and staff who are less than friendly. Jayanti (2022) in his research in Setonopande Village, Kediri, he found that although the responsiveness and assurance dimensions were already functioning well, the comfort of the service location, the expertise of the staff, and the friendliness of the apparatus still needed improvement. Meanwhile, the research Gumolung et al. (2023) research in Bowombaru Utara Village, Talaud, revealed persistent weaknesses in the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, and service assurance. These findings demonstrate that the quality of public services at the sub-district, urban village, and village levels still requires serious improvement. These problems are not unique to the previous research location but also have significant potential to recur in other areas, including Kutai Kartanegara Regency.

Based on the above description, it is clear that public services in Indonesia face complex challenges, both at the central and regional levels. While numerous regulations and policies for bureaucratic reform have been implemented, their implementation in the field remains suboptimal. Public service issues are not limited to the technical aspects of service provision, but also concern the capacity, integrity, and accountability of government officials. Therefore, an in-depth study of public services at the sub-district, urban village, and village levels is crucial for identifying strategies for improving service quality. This research is expected to contribute to efforts to improve public services to be more responsive, transparent, efficient, and in line with the interests of the wider community.

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with quantitative elements to strengthen the validity and reliability of the data. This study aims to describe and analyze public service phenomena based on facts found in the field. The data analysis approach uses an interactive method from Miles & Huberman (1994), which consists of the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions. To strengthen data accuracy and the degree of trustworthiness of the research results, data validation was also applied through four main aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability according to Maleong's approach. In addition, the analysis models used include descriptive analysis to understand the phenomenon, diagnostic analysis to identify causes, predictive analysis to estimate future trends, and prescriptive analysis to formulate recommendations based on the findings.

The research location was focused on Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan, with the analysis unit covering public service delivery organizations in five sub-districts: Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, Loa Kulu, and Tenggarong Seberang. These locations were selected based on regional categories, representing urban and rural zones to provide a comprehensive picture of the condition and quality of public services in the region. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, field observations, policy document analysis, surveys, and case studies. The data collected came from primary data (key informants and supporting informants) and secondary data (regulatory documents, reports, and regional statistical data). The research stages ranged from planning, data collection, analysis, to the preparation of applicable conclusions and recommendations.

Literature Review

The concept of the Ethical Dimensions of Public Service encompasses several key dimensions that influence governance and face challenges in its implementation, all within the historical context of development. The ethical dimensions of institutions and the relationship between organizations and morals are crucial in understanding ethical policy management (Roy et al., 2023). Public management plays a key role in promoting ethical and organizational effectiveness in public administration, supporting public service motivation and ethical behavior (Andersson & Ekelund, 2021). The core values that define ethics and integrity in public service include personal, professional, and organizational integrity (Joković, 2021). Public service motivation (PSM) serves as a buffer against unethical and ethical decision-making in situations where superiors demand unethical behavior from their employees (Gans-Morse et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021; Ripoll et al., 2022; Ripoll & Ballart, 2020). Ethics plays a vital role in public service, significantly impacting public satisfaction and the organization's success in carrying out its functions. Contrary to the assumption that government officials always advocate for the public interest, ethical leadership and practices are essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring effective service delivery (Ayieko & Okinda, 2025; Demir et al., 2023; Mozumder, 2021).

The behavior of bureaucrats and government officials is often influenced by various factors, including personal and social interests (Jayadi et al., 2023; Lee, 2023; Lotta & Marques, 2020), family, group, party, and higher structures (Effendi et al., 2023; Trondal &

Haslerud, 2023) this can create ethical challenges and conflicts in fulfilling their obligations. Ethics are often considered less important and irrelevant to public service, even though ethics is one of the factors that influence public satisfaction and the success of organizations in carrying out public service functions. The assumption that government officials always defend the public interest is not entirely true, because in practice there are cases that show the dominance of personal interests, family, group, party, and even higher power structures in influencing bureaucratic behavior (Trondal & Haslerud, 2023). In fact, Law No. 25 of 2009 actually regulates strict sanctions for public service providers, ranging from written warnings, demotions, dismissal, license revocation, to criminal sanctions and fines.

Results and Discussion

This presentation presents research results obtained from the process of collecting and analyzing data related to the quality of public services in sub-district governments in Kutai Kartanegara Regency. The research results are systematically compiled to describe the actual conditions in the field, both from the perspective of service providers (government officials) and service recipients (the public). This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the level of performance, professionalism, and ethics in the provision of public services at the sub-district level.

Each sub-discussion in this chapter is structured based on key indicators for assessing public services, such as service ethics, bureaucratic reform, service system effectiveness, and innovations implemented by each sub-district. The analysis is descriptive and comparative to assess the extent to which the principles of good governance, transparency, and public accountability have been implemented in service delivery practices. Therefore, this chapter not only presents quantitative achievements through survey results and graphs but also provides an in-depth qualitative interpretation of the dynamics of public services in the research area.

Public service ethics

The graph above shows a comparison of Public Service Ethics between service providers and service recipients in five sub-districts: Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Loa Janan, Loa Kulu, and Sanga-Sanga. Overall, all sub-districts scored in the “Very Good” category ($\geq 80\%$), indicating that the implementation of ethics in public service has been running well. Tenggarong Seberang and Kembang Janggut sub-districts demonstrated a congruence in perceptions between officials and the public (81–82%), indicating that the values of honesty, responsibility, and respect for the community have been consistently implemented. Meanwhile, Loa Janan sub-district also showed positive results, although the service provider score was slightly below the “very good” threshold (79%), with areas that still need to be strengthened in the aspects of discipline and service commitment.

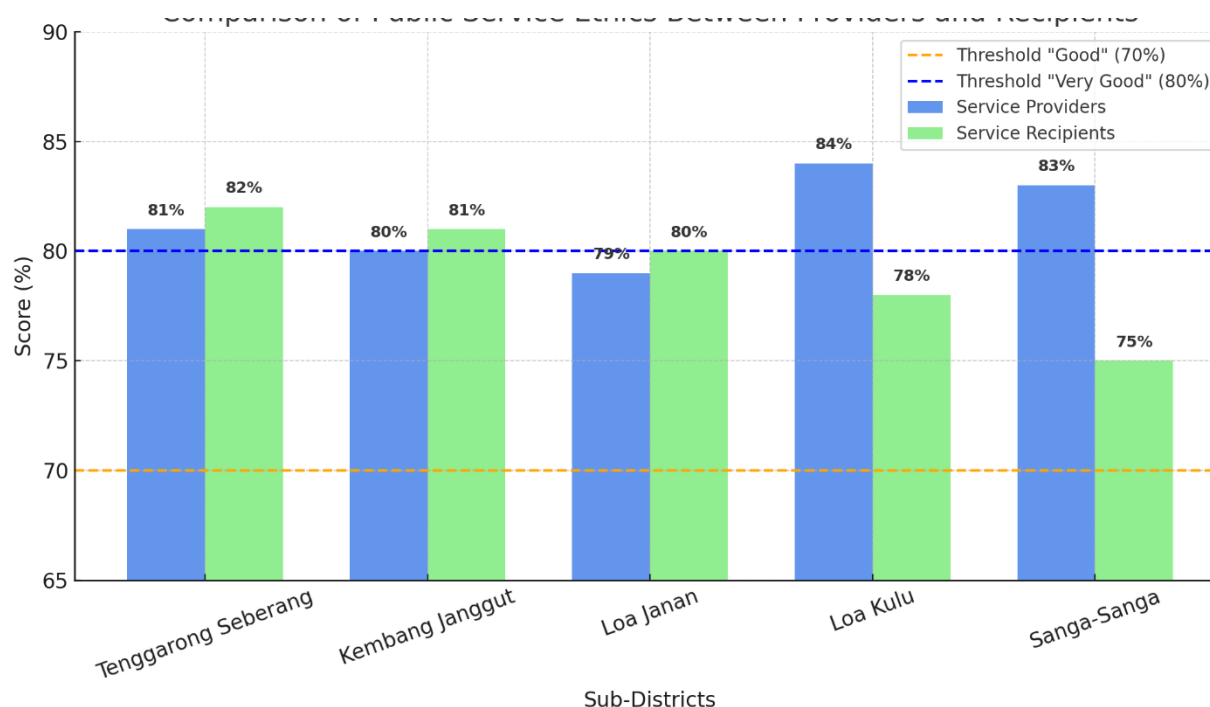


Figure 1. Comparison of public service ethics between providers and recipients

On the other hand, Loa Kulu and Sanga-Sanga sub-districts showed a significant gap in perception between service providers and recipients, with a significant difference in scores (6–8%). This indicates that although officials feel they are working with good ethics, the public still perceives that service quality is not yet optimal, particularly in terms of fairness, speed, and equity of service. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that although the quality of public service ethics in the five sub-districts is classified as very good, efforts are needed to improve communication, transparency, and regular evaluation of public satisfaction. Furthermore, ongoing training related to service ethics and public orientation is also important to ensure that the ethical standards applied by officials are in line with the expectations and actual experiences of the public.

Public service reform

The following graph shows the comparison of Public Service Reform results between service providers (blue) and service recipients (green) in five sub-districts: Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu. Overall, all sub-districts have achieved the “Good” to “Very Good” category, with scores above 70%. Kenohan sub-district (79%) holds the highest position, indicating that the implementation of reforms such as after-hours services and digital innovation has been effective. In contrast, Kembang Janggut and Loa Kulu are in the 70–71% range, indicating that although reforms have been implemented, the quality of their implementation still needs to be improved.

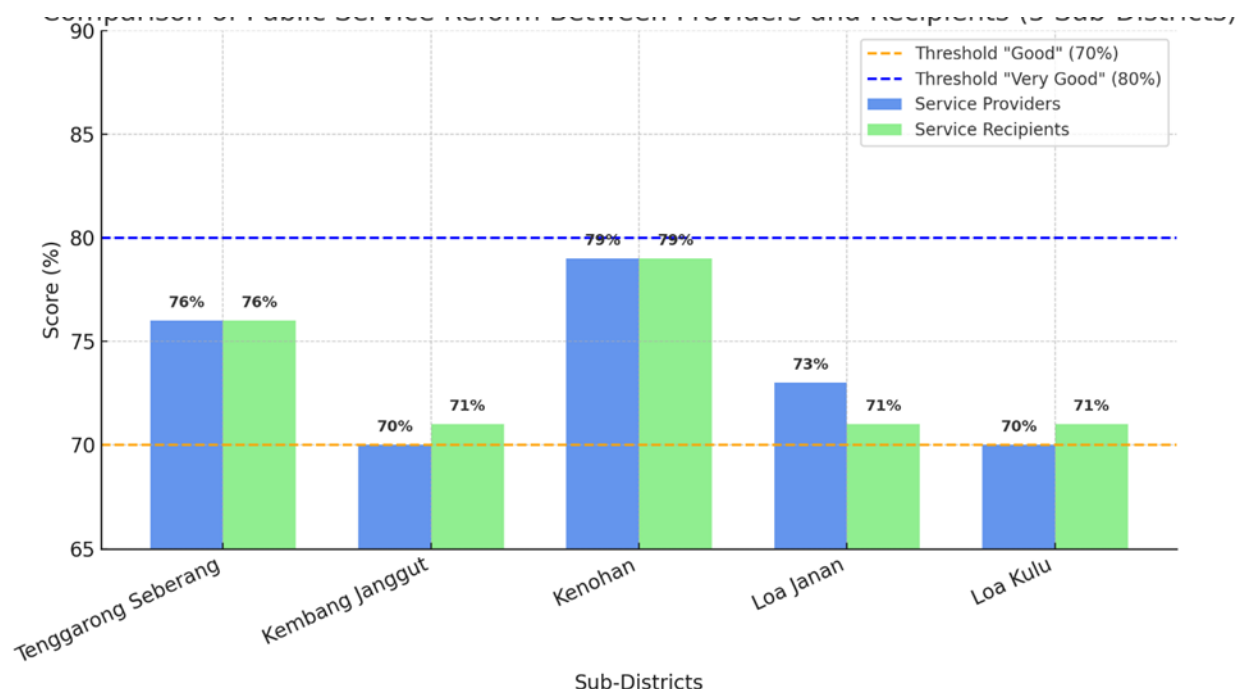


Figure 2. Comparison of public service reform between providers and recipients

While the difference in scores between service providers and recipients was relatively small, indicating a fairly consistent perception of the effectiveness of public service reforms, the slight differences in Loa Janan and Kembang Janggut indicate that public satisfaction with the reforms has not been fully maximized. These findings suggest that initiatives such as One Stop Service, OSS, mobile government, and administrative reforms have had a positive impact, VIP services and expanded public service hours remain areas that need to be strengthened to ensure more inclusive and equitable reforms across all sub-districts.

Public service issues

Based on the survey results and visualizations, the level of Public Service Reform in the five sub-districts shows a positive trend, both from the perspective of service providers and recipients. Tenggarong Seberang and Kembang Janggut sub-districts stand out with consistently high scores on both sides (79–80%), indicating the effective implementation of service systems such as One Stop Service and technology-based innovations. Loa Janan and Loa Kulu sub-districts recorded slightly lower scores (74–78%), indicating the need for improvements in aspects of innovation and digital-based services. Meanwhile, Sanga-Sanga shows a balance between the perceptions of providers and recipients (77% and 75%), reflecting relatively stable public services.

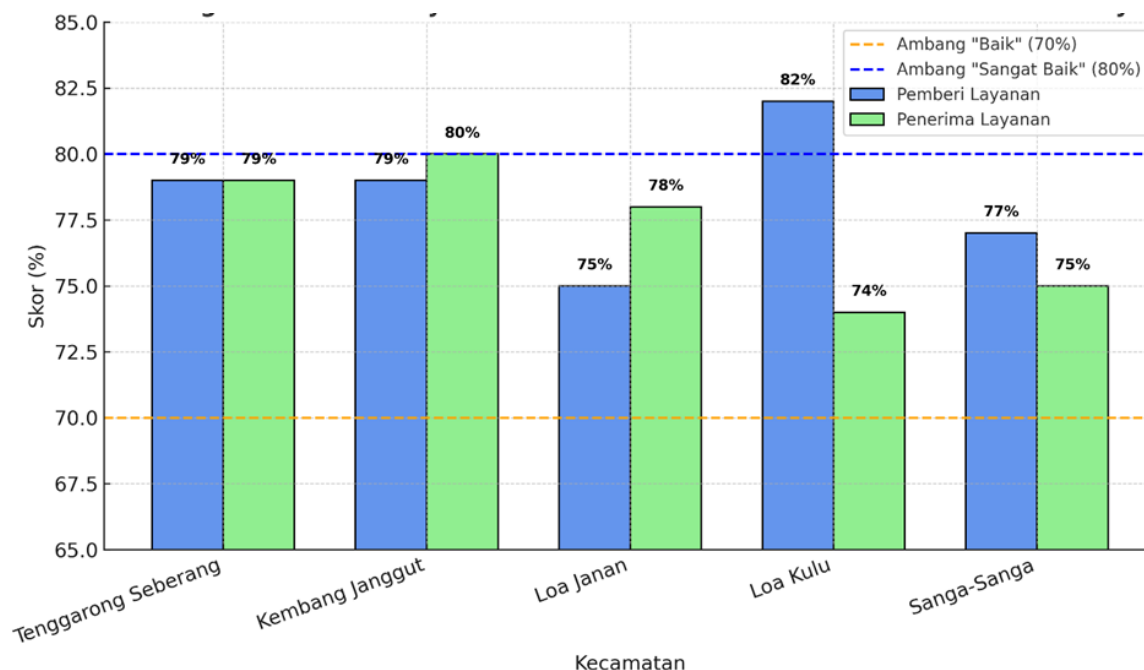


Figure 3. Comparison of the quality of public services based on service providers and recipients

Overall, all sub-districts were above the 70% threshold (Good), with most approaching or exceeding 80% (Very Good). This indicates that public service reforms in the region have been well underway, although there is still room for improvement in the dimensions of service time flexibility and special services, such as VIP classes, which still scored low.

Improving the quality of public services

The graph above shows a comparison of public service quality improvement assessments between service providers (blue) and service recipients (green) in five sub-districts: Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu. Overall, both groups scored in the "Good" to "Very Good" category, with most scores above the 70% threshold. Loa Janan sub-district (85%) had the highest score among service providers, demonstrating effectiveness in implementing innovation and collaboration between agencies.

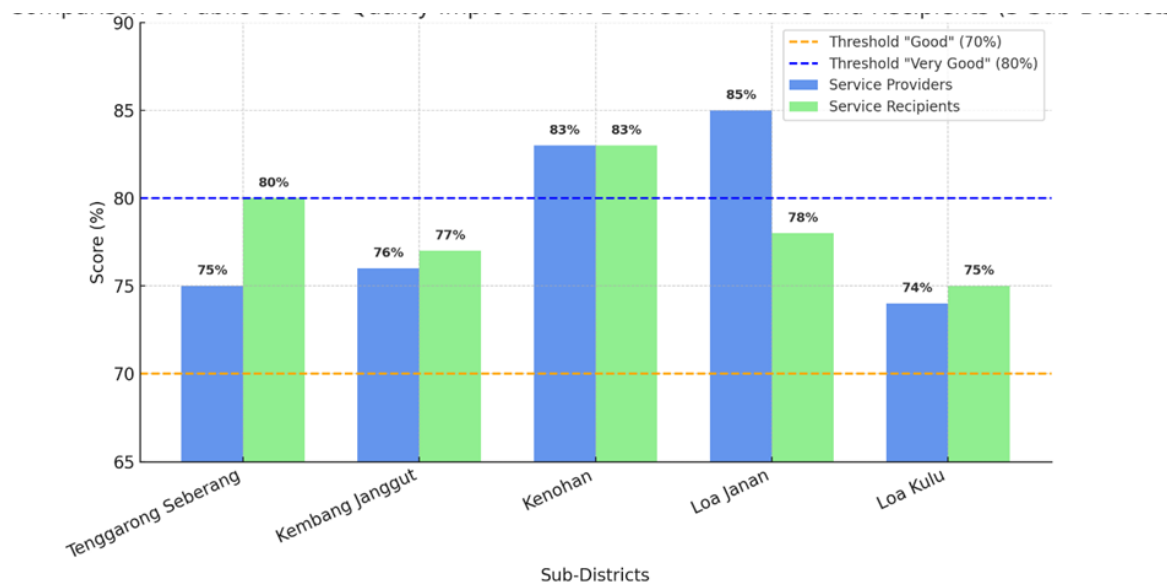


Figure 4. Comparison of public services quality improvement between providers and recipients

Meanwhile, the average service recipient showed relatively balanced results with service provider assessments, although there were slight differences in some sub-districts. For example, service recipients in Tenggarong Seberang (80%) rated services higher than providers, indicating public satisfaction with improved service quality. However, in Loa Kulu, both providers and recipients still recorded the lowest scores (74–75%), indicating the need to improve human resource capacity and supporting facilities so that public service quality can consistently reach the “Very Good” category across all sub-districts.

Public service supervision

The graph above shows the results of a comparison of public service monitoring between service providers (blue) and service recipients (green) in five sub-districts: Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu. Overall, all sub-districts scored above 70%, meaning they are in the “Good” to “Very Good” category. Kenohan Sub-district (88%) recorded the highest scores for both service providers and recipients, demonstrating the effectiveness of internal monitoring systems such as the implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM), the active role of the Inspectorate, and mediation mechanisms in handling public complaints.

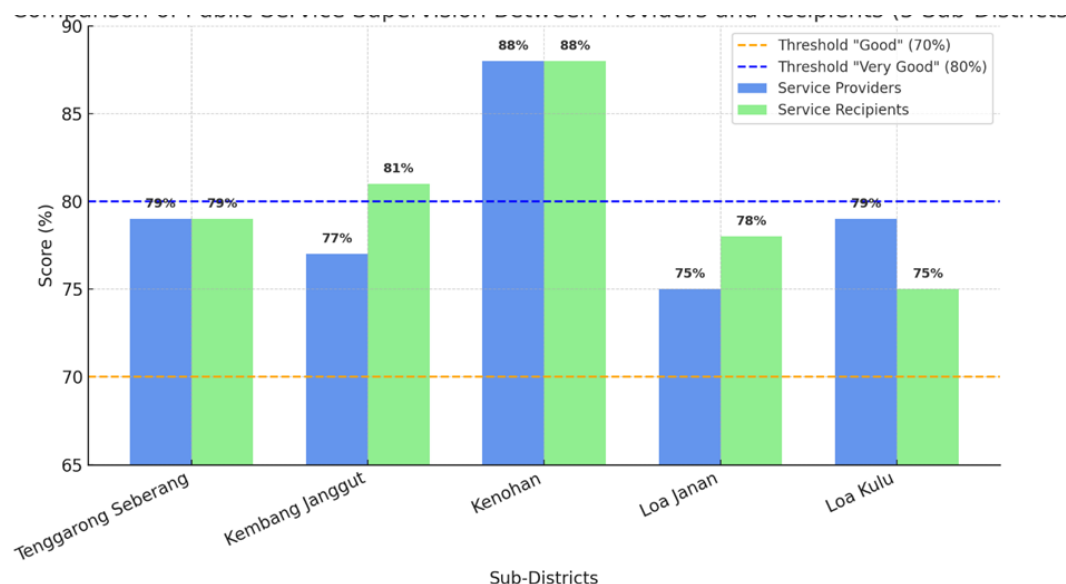


Figure 5. Comparison of public service supervision between providers and recipients

Meanwhile, Loa Janan (75–78%) had the lowest score, indicating a need for improvement in the implementation of rewards and punishments and the participation of external institutions such as the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) and the Ombudsman. The narrow gap between the assessments of service providers and recipients suggests a relatively aligned perception of the effectiveness of public oversight. However, these results also indicate that increasing the capacity of supervisory officials and strengthening cross-agency collaboration are still needed to ensure more consistent and transparent oversight of public services across all sub-districts.

Principles of public service

The graph above shows the results of a comparison of the implementation of public service principles between service providers (blue) and service recipients (green) in five sub-districts, namely Tenggara Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu. In general, all sub-districts scored above 75%, indicating the implementation of "Very Good" public service principles. Kenohan sub-district (88%) was the highest in terms of both service providers and recipients, indicating optimal implementation of the principles of timeliness, politeness, and comfort. In contrast, Tenggara Seberang (78–79%) and Loa Kulu (78%) still require improvement, especially in the aspects of cost transparency and the use of information technology in services.

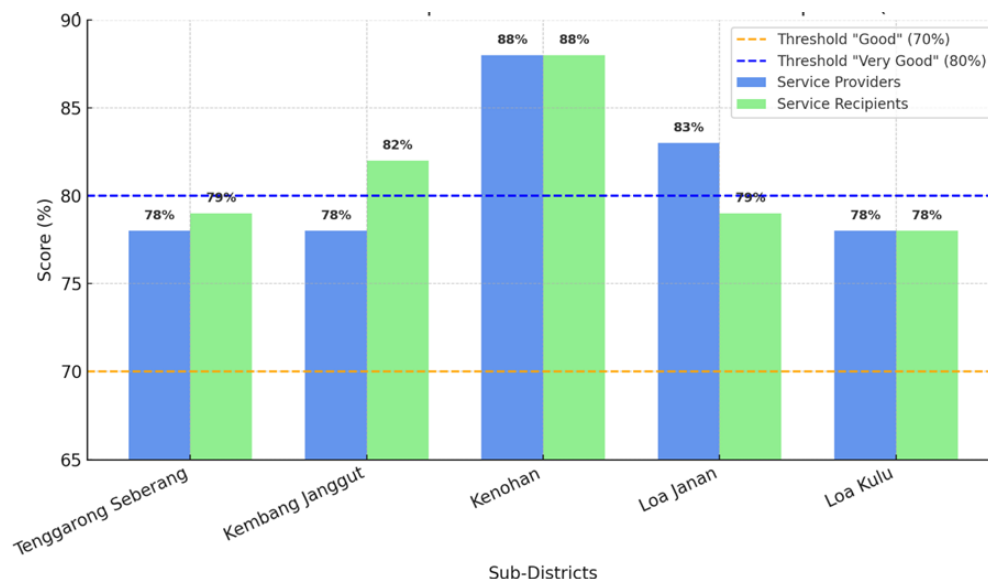


Figure 6. Comparison of public service principles between providers and recipients

Overall, the gap between provider and recipient ratings was relatively small, indicating congruent perceptions of the quality of public service implementation. However, the small differences in Kembang Janggut and Loa Janan, where recipients scored higher, indicate an increase in positive public experiences with increasingly friendly, efficient, and accessible public services. These findings confirm that strengthening public service principles, particularly in terms of cost clarity, accessibility, and the use of technology, still needs to be improved to ensure all sub-districts achieve sustainable service excellence.

Public service standards

The following graph shows a comparison of Public Service Standards between service providers (blue) and service recipients (green) in five sub-districts: Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu. Overall, all sub-districts are in the “Good” to “Very Good” category, with scores above 70%. Kenohan sub-district (83%) demonstrated the best performance in terms of both service providers and recipients, indicating that clarity of public service requirements, mechanisms, and procedures has been implemented very well. Conversely, Loa Kulu (75–76%) received the lowest score, indicating that there is still room for improvement in terms of cost transparency and speed of service.

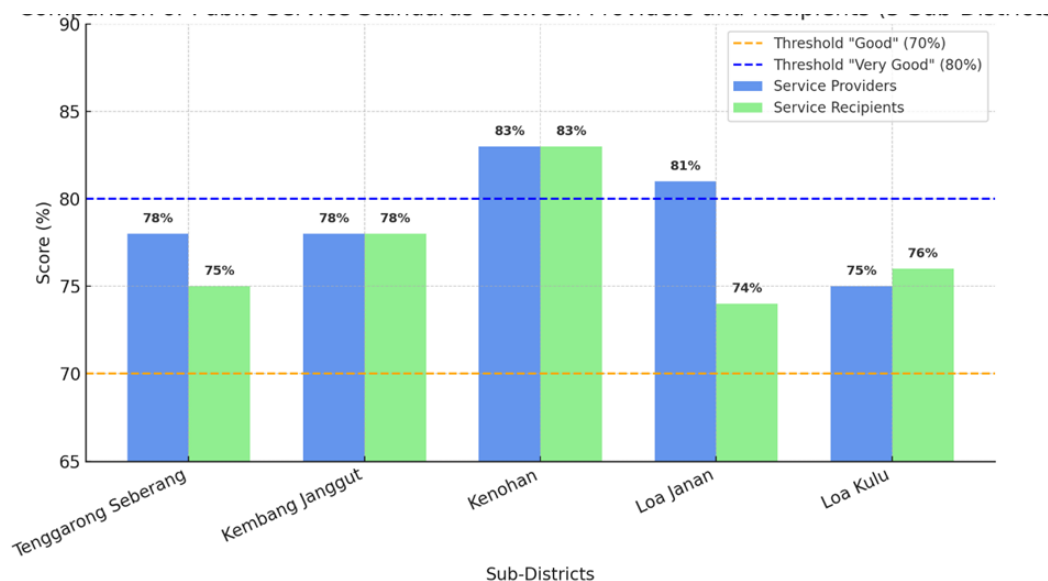


Figure 6. Comparison of public service standards between providers and recipients

Comparisons between the two groups revealed a relatively small difference in scores, indicating a congruence in perceptions between providers and recipients regarding the quality of public service standards. However, there was a slight difference in Loa Janan, where providers rated the service standards higher than recipients. This suggests that the public still has expectations for increased efficiency and clarity of service times. Overall, these results indicate that the implementation of public service standards in the five sub-districts has been successful, but improvements in user feedback and tariff transparency are needed to achieve higher quality public services.

The quality of public service is a key indicator of the success of regional bureaucracy in realizing effective and community-oriented governance. Various studies have shown that good public service must meet five main dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Gumolung et al., 2023; Prihatin et al., 2021) in the context of Kutai Kartanegara, tangible dimensions such as infrastructure and comfort of service areas remain the primary concerns influencing public perception of civil service performance. Titania's research (2023) strengthens these findings by showing that limited facilities, irregular procedures, and minimal cost transparency are the main sources of public complaints about local government services.

Besides In addition to technical aspects, the quality of public services is also influenced by the integrity and motivation of civil servants. International studies confirm that public service motivation (PSM) has a significant influence on the ethical and professional behavior of public employees (Ripoll, 2022; Ripoll & Schott, 2024). Civil servants with high PSM tend to be able to resist group pressure and unethical demands from superiors, thereby strengthening public trust in government institutions (Demir et al., 2023; Uluturk et al., 2023) in Indonesia, this aligns with the mandate of Law No. 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, which requires officials to operate with the principles of accountability, transparency, and empathy toward the public using the service. Zulyani's research (2020)

even highlighting the importance of agile government to create a world-class bureaucracy by increasing flexibility and responsiveness of services.

In the context of bureaucratic reform, the policy of simplifying the structure and digitizing public services is an important strategy to increase the efficiency and quality of services at the sub-district level (Aditya Ari Nugroho et al., 2021; Kementrian PANRB, 2019). Lim and Lee's research (2021) shows that the implementation of non-face-to-face public services can increase positive public perception of government organizations, especially when supported by transparent and equitable information systems. Meanwhile, the Public Service Logic approach emphasizes that the creation of public value must be rooted in interactions between government and citizens as a joint process (co-creation) that fosters public trust and satisfaction (Osborne, 2020; Skålén & Trischler, 2024; Virtanen & Jalonen, 2023) therefore, improving the quality of public services in Kutai Kartanegara needs to be oriented towards public value-based governance, which focuses not only on speed and accuracy of service, but also on ethics, empathy, and active public participation in service improvement.

Theoretically, the results of this study strengthen the concepts of Public Service Motivation (PSM) and Public Service Logic as important frameworks for understanding public servant behavior and the creation of public value. High public service motivation serves as a moral mechanism that suppresses the potential for abuse of authority and enhances bureaucratic integrity (Ripoll, 2022; Ripoll & Schott, 2023) this is in line with the findings of Uluturk et al (Uluturk et al., 2023), which shows that ethical leadership can strengthen PSM and reduce work-related burnout among service-line officials. Practically, these results provide guidance for local governments, particularly at the sub-district level, to develop a performance management system that focuses not only on administrative results but also on instilling public ethical values and a spirit of service. This effort can be realized through integrity training, strengthening a work culture based on public values, and implementing a reward system for employees who demonstrate superior performance and are community-oriented.

From a policy perspective, improving the quality of public services must be accompanied by targeted, efficient, and equitable bureaucratic reform. Research by Aditya Ari Nugroho et al (Aditya Ari Nugroho et al., 2021) and the Ministry of PANRB (Kementrian PANRB, 2019) emphasized the importance of simplifying bureaucracy and reducing the hierarchy of positions to accelerate decision-making at the sub-district level. In addition, the digitalization of public services proposed by Lim and Lee (Lim & Lee, 2021) this research provides a practical basis for local governments to adopt technology-based service systems, enabling the public to obtain fast, transparent, and intervention-free services. Thus, the theoretical and practical implications of this research confirm that the quality of public services depends not only on bureaucratic structure but also on the integration of values, ethics, and innovation within the local government service system.

Comparison with previous studies in Indonesia

The findings of this study are consistent with a number of national studies highlighting similar issues at the local government level. For example, research by Prihatin et al (Prihatin et al., 2021) at the Dumai City Sub-district Office and Gumolung et al (Gumolung et al., 2023) a study in Talaud found that the main weaknesses in public services in the region were limited human resources, a lack of service facilities, and low employee skills in operating technological devices. This was also reflected in Kutai Kartanegara, where infrastructure and staff professionalism were key challenges in providing excellent service to the public. However, compared to Titania's study (2023) which emphasizes the importance of compliance with Law No. 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services, this study focuses more on the ethical and motivational aspects of public service as internal drivers for improving service quality.

Furthermore, this study broadens its scope by linking the moral and motivational dimensions of civil servants to the effectiveness of public service policies. This approach has not been widely explored in previous studies in Indonesia, which generally focus on structural and administrative aspects. For example, Lestari and Santoso's (2022) study emphasized the implementation of good governance in public services without examining the depth of individual ethical values within the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, Zulyani's research (Zulyani, 2020) the study on agile government demonstrates the importance of an adaptive and responsive bureaucracy to public needs, in line with the direction of bureaucratic reform in Kutai Kartanegara, which seeks to create flexible, transparent, and fast services. Thus, the results of this study add a new dimension to the literature on Indonesian public administration by emphasizing the importance of integrating bureaucratic structure, service ethics, and the moral motivation of civil servants in building public trust.

Conclusion

This study shows that the quality of public services in five sub-districts of Kutai Kartanegara Regency, namely Tenggarong Seberang, Kembang Janggut, Kenohan, Loa Janan, and Loa Kulu, is in the good to very good category based on the results of a survey of the apparatus and the community receiving services. The results of the study confirm that the sub-district government has implemented the principles of bureaucratic reform and excellent service through various innovations such as the One Stop Service system, One Single Submission, and information technology-based services, although there are still several obstacles in terms of human resources and service infrastructure. This study also explains that public service motivation plays a role as a major factor that encourages the apparatus to provide services with integrity, transparency, and accountability to the community. In addition, the application of public service ethics and value-oriented leadership has a positive influence on improving the performance of sub-district organizations.

Overall, this study concludes that improving the quality of public services in Kutai Kartanegara Regency requires integrated efforts including bureaucratic restructuring, strengthening staff competencies, and implementing a digital system based on public values. Therefore, the local government needs to develop policies that encourage collaboration

between the government, the community, and the private sector to achieve professional, innovative, and sustainable public services.

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