From Compliance to Learning: Citizen Feedback in Indonesian Public Service

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Abstrak

Latar Belakang: Survei kepuasan masyarakat banyak diterapkan di organisasi pelayanan publik, namun kontribusinya terhadap perbaikan layanan sering terbatas saat umpan balik hanya dipandang sebagai kewajiban kepatuhan. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini mengkaji pemanfaatan hasil survei kepuasan untuk perbaikan layanan dengan memfokuskan pada proses organisasi dalam menafsirkan dan menindaklanjuti umpan balik. **Desain:** Menggunakan studi kasus analitis dengan metode campuran pada Kantor Pelayanan Kekayaan Negara dan Lelang (KPKNL) Palu, Indonesia, penelitian ini menggunakan data survei kepuasan resmi (2023), diskusi internal, dan analisis dokumen. **Hasil:** Temuan menunjukkan umpan balik berkontribusi pada perubahan hanya ketika terintegrasi dalam proses manajerial rutin. Pemanfaatannya melalui empat tahap: kesadaran bersama atas masalah, koordinasi terlembaga dalam forum internal, perubahan material selektif pada area layanan yang memungkinkan, dan capaian yang dibatasi kendala struktural organisasi. Perbaikan lebih mudah pada aspek layanan tangible, sementara isu kompleks seperti ketepatan waktu kurang responsif. Kesimpulan: Studi ini menekankan pemahaman berbasis proses terhadap pembelajaran organisasi yang digerakkan umpan balik, serta pentingnya melembagakan rutinitas pemanfaatan umpan balik, bukan sekadar pengumpulan data, untuk mendorong perbaikan layanan bertahap.

Kata Kunci: Umpan balik masyarakat; Rutinitas organisasi; Perbaikan pelayanan publik; Indonesia; Studi kasus.

Abstract

Background: Citizen satisfaction surveys are widely implemented in public service organisations, yet their contribution to service improvement often remains limited when feedback is treated primarily as a compliance requirement. Objective: This study examines how satisfaction survey results are utilised for service improvement by

focusing on the organisational processes through which feedback is interpreted and acted upon. **Design:** *Using a mixed-methods analytical case study of the State Asset and Auction Service Office (KPKNL) Palu, Indonesia, the study draws on official satisfaction survey data (2023), internal discussions, and documentary analysis.* **Results:** *The findings reveal that feedback contributes to change only when embedded within routine managerial processes. Utilisation unfolds through four stages: shared awareness of problems, routinised coordination in internal forums, selective material change in feasible areas, and outcomes bounded by organisational constraints. Improvements were more evident in tangible service aspects, while structurally complex issues like timeliness were less responsive. Conclusions: The study argues for a process-oriented understanding of feedback-driven learning, highlighting the critical need to institutionalise feedback utilisation routines, rather than merely collect data, to enable incremental service improvement.*

Keywords*: Citizen feedback; Organisational routines; Public service improvement; Indonesia; Case study.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Improving public service quality is a central issue in contemporary public sector governance as governments face stronger demands for transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Citizens are increasingly active evaluators whose experiences reflect not only service performance but also institutional credibility. Transparency, participation, and accountability jointly shape how citizen input enters public decision-making (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014), while public trust remains a key institutional resource influencing compliance, cooperation, and policy support (OECD, 2017).

Citizen satisfaction surveys have therefore been institutionalised to connect service quality assessment with accountability and trust building. Yet they do not automatically lead to organisational change; in many public organisations, citizen feedback is frequently processed as compliance-oriented reporting rather than as a basis for organisational learning (Kowalski et al., 2020). Service quality is multidimensional,

covering procedures, facilities, information clarity, and interpersonal interaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988), and research consistently shows satisfaction is strongly shaped by perceived responsiveness and clear information, including in digital and hybrid services (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, satisfaction surveys are formalised through the *Indeks Kepuasan Masyarakat* (IKM), a mandatory instrument that standardises service quality indicators aligned with national service standards (Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, 2017). However, survey data are often treated as compliance-driven reporting rather than as inputs for learning and improvement; results may be aggregated and submitted without systematic internal analysis and deliberation (Kowalski et al., 2020). International evidence likewise stresses that citizen feedback improves governance only when embedded in routines and decision processes (Kowalski et al., 2020), and e-government studies highlight that feedback works best when institutionally integrated rather than symbolic (Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022). Perceived responsiveness is pivotal: surveys are viewed as meaningful when results align with visible organisational responses (Qin et al., 2025), and transparency strengthens trust only when disclosure is paired with responsiveness and justification (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017).

Accordingly, this study examines how citizen satisfaction survey results are integrated into organisational routines and managerial practices in a public service organisation. Using the State Asset and Auction Service Office (Kantor Pelayanan Kekayaan Negara dan Lelang – KPKNL) Palu as the setting, it focuses on how feedback is interpreted, discussed internally, and translated into improvement

actions. The study aims to: (1) identify priority service quality dimensions based on citizen satisfaction data; (2) examine how survey results are reviewed and converted into managerial actions; and (3) assess early changes in service quality following feedback-informed interventions.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Citizen Feedback and Satisfaction Surveys in Public Services

Citizen feedback has become central to public service management because it operationalises transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Satisfaction surveys are widely used to capture citizens' perceptions of service quality across service dimensions, and evidence shows satisfaction is strongly influenced by responsiveness, reliability, and information clarity, including in digital and hybrid service environments (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2023). In Indonesia, feedback is institutionalised through IKM, a mandatory instrument that standardises indicators for comparison across units and over time under national evaluation regulations (Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, 2017). However, Indonesian evidence suggests implementation often prioritises procedural compliance, while follow-up and managerial integration remain limited (Harkeni & Aprilianti, 2022). Public administration research similarly finds surveys frequently function as reporting tools rather than learning inputs, since results are aggregated and submitted without sustained internal analysis and deliberation (Kowalski et al., 2020). Without institutional integration, feedback risks becoming symbolic rather than

transformative (Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022). Perceived credibility depends on responsiveness: feedback mechanisms are seen as meaningful when results are followed by visible action (Qin et al., 2025), and transparency strengthens trust only when disclosure is paired with responsiveness and justification (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017).

2. Service Quality Dimensions and Measurement Frameworks

Service quality in public administration is commonly treated as multidimensional. SERVQUAL remains influential, identifying tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as core dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In Indonesia, these dimensions are operationalised through IKM indicators aligned with national standards, positioning IKM as both a measurement tool and a standardisation mechanism (Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, 2017). Empirical work in developing-country and Indonesian settings indicates tangible and informational aspects, such as facilities, usability, and clarity of information, continue to shape satisfaction, especially where procedural complexity and waiting times are salient (Nguyen et al., 2020). By contrast, procedural dimensions such as timeliness and responsiveness persist as sources of dissatisfaction because they reflect staffing capacity, workflow design, and inter-unit coordination, making them less amenable to quick fixes. Interpersonal performance often scores higher and may compensate for structural constraints, consistent with street-level bureaucracy and frontline coping strategies (Lipsky, 1980). Digitalisation does not remove these concerns; it reshapes them by intensifying the importance of information clarity, system reliability, and responsiveness in e-government settings (Pham et al., 2023). These patterns suggest that

service dimensions respond unevenly to improvement efforts, which is critical for interpreting survey results and designing feasible interventions.

3. Feedback Utilisation and Organisational Learning

The contribution of surveys to service improvement depends on utilisation rather than collection. Organisational learning perspectives argue that feedback produces learning only when translated into changes in routines, practices, and decision-making, yet public organisations face constraints from hierarchy, compliance cultures, and limited discretion. Feedback utilisation is often described as a staged process involving interpretation, prioritisation, and institutional response, and it becomes consequential when embedded in routine practices and decision forums rather than confined to reporting (Kowalski et al., 2020). Transparency and accountability arrangements further shape learning potential, as trust gains depend on responsiveness and justification (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). Evidence also suggests feedback is more influential when deliberated in internal managerial forums than when left at aggregate reporting level (Hsu, 2025).

4. Feedback Utilisation as Organisational Routines in Hierarchical Public Service Organisations

In hierarchical settings, feedback operates through organisational routines that structure how information is processed and acted upon. Learning theory distinguishes routine corrective responses from deeper reflection: single-loop learning adjusts actions without questioning underlying assumptions, while double-loop learning challenges governing norms and structures (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Satisfaction surveys in bureaucracies tend to generate single-loop, low-risk

adjustments, such as facilities or information improvements, more often than structural reforms involving workflow redesign or timeliness, particularly under compliance pressures. Actionability increases when feedback review is routinised through staff meetings, performance reviews, and planning cycles (Kowalski et al., 2020) and when participation and feedback processes are institutionally integrated (Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022). Consistent with street-level bureaucracy, high interpersonal scores may reflect frontline accommodation amid systemic constraints (Lipsky, 1980). Legitimacy still hinges on visible responsiveness: citizens perceive feedback systems as meaningful when actions follow results, and transparency supports trust only when paired with responsiveness and justification (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017).

5. Research Gap

While determinants of citizen satisfaction and the use of surveys as performance instruments are well established (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2023), less attention has been paid to how survey results are interpreted, deliberated, and translated into managerial action inside public service organisations, particularly under hierarchical and resource constraints where compliance pressures shape routines (Kowalski et al., 2020; Tejedo-Romero et al., 2022; Harkeni & Aprilianti, 2022). This study addresses that gap by adopting a process-oriented lens on feedback utilisation, treating satisfaction surveys as potential mechanisms of organisational learning whose effects depend on routinised review, prioritisation, and observable follow-up (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Qin et al., 2025; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017; Hsu, 2025).

C. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods analytical case study to examine how citizen satisfaction survey results are utilised for service improvement in a public service organisation. KPKNL Palu was selected because it routinely conducts mandatory IKM surveys and had initiated internal efforts to respond to survey findings. The case is treated as an analytical case aimed at theory refinement.

Data collection combined quantitative and qualitative sources. Quantitative data came from KPKNL Palu's 2023 IKM surveys measuring twelve standard service elements, including procedures, timeliness, information clarity, facilities, staff competence and behaviour, and complaint handling. Two levels of quantitative data were used: (1) annual 2023 aggregated results to map overall satisfaction patterns and recurring complaint themes; and (2) disaggregated service-element scores for April–May 2023 as a focused snapshot to identify relative strengths and recurring issues. Qualitative data included three structured internal discussions with managerial staff and front-line officers to interpret survey results and identify feasible responses. Open-ended survey comments and relevant institutional documents were also reviewed.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, quantitative data were analysed descriptively to summarise satisfaction distributions and relative performance across service elements. Second, qualitative data from discussions and open-ended responses were analysed thematically to identify recurring issues and organisational constraints shaping responses. Third, findings were integrated through a mechanism-based

interpretation to trace how survey feedback was prioritised, coordinated internally, and selectively translated into service changes over a short observation period.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

This study reports results in a logical sequence from overall satisfaction patterns to element-level variation and organisational follow-up at KPKNL Palu, based on the 2023 annual IKM results, April–May 2023 element-level scores, internal discussions, and open-ended survey responses.

Overall citizen satisfaction

The 2023 IKM results place overall satisfaction in the "very good" category on the official 0–100 scale, with approximately 97 percent of respondents reporting satisfaction. High aggregate satisfaction, however, coexisted with recurring concerns concentrated in specific service elements.

Variation across service elements

Element-level results show non-uniform performance. Service procedures and service timeliness repeatedly appeared as the lowest-rated elements relative to others, including staff competence, staff behaviour, and complaint handling, which were evaluated more positively. The April–May 2023 distributions reinforced this pattern, where procedures and timeliness consistently occupied the lowest relative positions across monthly results.

Interpretation, prioritisation, and follow-up

Internal discussions treated survey results and open-ended comments as signals of operational bottlenecks requiring shared interpretation. Staff differentiated between issues perceived as immediately actionable (physical arrangements, information clarity) and those viewed as structurally constrained (timeliness), shaped by staffing limitations, workload fluctuations, and dependencies on upstream units. This distinction informed prioritisation. The organisation concentrated on feasible, low-risk, and visible improvements, including reorganising service spaces to improve user flow, updating signage, and standardising communication materials to reduce ambiguity in procedures. A short-term internal assessment conducted around three months later indicated modest perceived improvements in facilities and information clarity, while changes in timeliness remained limited.

2. Discussion

Main outcome

The findings show that satisfaction surveys contributed to improvement through a staged utilisation process rather than an automatic feedback-to-performance link. Survey signals first created shared awareness of recurring bottlenecks, then entered routine forums where staff negotiated feasible responses, and finally produced selective material changes that were bounded by structural constraints.

This finding confirms that the existence of satisfaction data alone is insufficient to generate organisational change. Instead, feedback becomes consequential only when it is actively interpreted and embedded within routine managerial coordination processes.

Comparison with prior evidence and implications

The tendency to prioritise administratively feasible actions over structurally embedded constraints mirrors patterns reported in other Indonesian public service settings, where follow-up often focuses on improvements that fit existing authority and resources (Adlin et al., 2025; Harkeni & Aprilianti, 2022). It also aligns with evidence that satisfaction surveys frequently become compliance-oriented reporting tools unless paired with systematic internal follow-up (Harkeni & Aprilianti, 2022). In this case, facilities and information clarity were treated as controllable and visible, while timeliness demanded cross-unit coordination and workflow changes beyond frontline discretion, resulting in slower progress. This is consistent with findings that tangible and informational attributes are typically more responsive to short-term interventions than procedural dimensions such as timeliness and responsiveness (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Relative to studies emphasising technical or analytical mechanisms for using feedback, such as large-scale text analytics of citizen comments (Kowalski et al., 2020), this study foregrounds the importance of routinised managerial forums in translating feedback into action. The implication is that, in hierarchical public service organisations, utilisation hinges less on analytical sophistication and more on institutionalised coordination capacity and decision discretion, which determine whether feedback can be converted into procedural change rather than only visible, low-coordination fixes.

Why results emerged as observed

Two mechanisms help explain the outcomes. First, a feasibility filter defined "actionable feedback," favouring low-risk, rapid fixes with

minimal inter-unit coordination. This helps explain why some service elements repeatedly received follow-up, while others changed little despite persistent negative feedback.

Second, strong interpersonal performance buffered dissatisfaction. High ratings of staff behaviour coexisted with weaker scores on timeliness and procedures, indicating that positive frontline interactions tempered frustration with delays and rigid processes. This aligns with street-level bureaucracy research showing that staff use interpersonal accommodation to manage systemic constraints and workload pressures (Lipsky, 1980).

Practical and policy utility

For managers, the results imply that survey value depends on institutionalising routine feedback review, translating element-level signals into assigned responsibilities, and communicating visible follow-up to sustain credibility. Satisfaction surveys are therefore most effective when treated as ongoing managerial tools rather than as periodic compliance outputs.

For policy use, the findings suggest that timeliness improvements require longer-horizon measures such as workload management, workflow redesign, and coordination arrangements with upstream units, rather than relying solely on frontline effort. This reinforces broader evidence that structural service dimensions are unlikely to improve through short-term or isolated interventions alone.

Strengths, limitations, and future research

This study's strength is its mechanism-focused analysis combining element-level survey patterns with internal sense-making and follow-up actions. By examining how feedback is interpreted and

prioritised within organisational routines, the study provides insight into why satisfaction surveys often produce selective and incremental change.

Limitations include reliance on one organisational case, a short observation window for follow-up, and the use of April–May as a focused analytical snapshot. Future studies should extend observation periods, compare multiple organisations, and test whether routinised feedback forums predict sustained change in structurally complex dimensions such as timeliness.

E. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

Citizen satisfaction surveys support public service improvement when feedback is systematically interpreted, prioritised, and embedded in routine managerial coordination, not when treated primarily as compliance reporting. The KPKNL Palu case shows that feedback utilisation tends to produce selective, incremental improvements in dimensions that are within organisational discretion and require limited coordination, while structurally constrained issues such as timeliness change more slowly due to workflow, resource, and inter-unit dependencies.

2. Recommendations

Public service organisations should institutionalise regular feedback review forums, convert survey findings into clear action plans with assigned accountability, and communicate follow-up actions to strengthen perceived responsiveness. For structurally complex problems, managers should complement short-term improvements with

longer-term coordination and process redesign initiatives. Future research should examine feedback utilisation over longer time horizons and across comparative cases to assess how leadership, organisational routines, and coordination capacity shape the sustainability of feedback-driven learning.

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