



Responsibility in Public Services at The Tirta Darma Ayu Regional Public Drinking Water Company, Sindang Service Branch, Indramayu Regency

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Abstract

Service responsiveness is a critical dimension of public service quality, particularly in essential sectors such as clean water provision, where service disruptions directly affect community welfare. This study aims to analyze the responsiveness of public service delivery in handling customer complaints at the Sindang Service Branch of the Tirta Darma Ayu Regional Public Drinking Water Company (also known as PERUMDAM in Indonesian) in Indramayu Regency. The research focuses on identifying the level of responsiveness, the constraints faced in service implementation, and potential strategies to improve complaint handling performance. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving key informants, including managerial staff, service officers, technical personnel, and customers. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation techniques to ensure data validity. The findings reveal that service responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch has been procedurally institutionalized, particularly in the initial stages of service interaction. Customers generally receive prompt acknowledgment, and complaint recording mechanisms are systematically implemented through both offline and digital channels. However, responsiveness remains predominantly procedural rather than outcome-oriented. Timeliness emerges as the weakest dimension, especially in technically complex services such as pipeline repairs and new household connection installations. Constraints related to procedural rigidity, limited technical personnel, uneven staff competence, and insufficient integration between administrative and technical units hinder effective service resolution. The study concludes that while the Sindang Service Branch demonstrates commitment to responsive public service delivery at the procedural level, improving performance-based responsiveness requires strengthening service-level standards, enhancing human resource capacity, improving inter-unit coordination, and optimizing integrated information systems. These efforts are essential to improve service timeliness, customer satisfaction, and public trust in regional drinking water services.

Keywords: Service responsiveness, public service quality, customer complaint handling, regional drinking water company, public administration

1. Introduction

Public service is a fundamental pillar of good governance, reflecting the state's responsibility to fulfill the basic rights and needs of citizens. The quality of public service is often used as a key indicator of institutional performance, particularly for government agencies and regionally-owned enterprises that provide essential services (Salam, 2023). Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services requires all public service providers to provide prompt, accurate, and responsive services to public needs and complaints (Herawati et al., 2024). In this context, responsiveness is a crucial dimension of service quality, as it demonstrates an organization's ability to effectively address user problems and dissatisfaction (Singh et al., 2023).

With increasing information transparency and public awareness of consumer rights, expectations for the quality of public services are rising. Citizens demand not only the availability of services but also accessibility, fairness, and effective complaint handling. Efficient complaint management plays a crucial role in minimizing conflict, building public trust, and enhancing customer satisfaction. Empirical evidence from Astya (2025) shows that responsiveness in complaint handling has a positive and significant relationship with public satisfaction, highlighting the importance of responsiveness in achieving high-quality public services.

The Regional Drinking Water Public Company (*Perusahaan Umum Daerah Air Minum* (PERUMDAM)) is a public institution that provides a vital service in the form of clean water supply, which is crucial for public health,

sanitation, and social welfare. Disruptions in water service, whether related to quality, quantity, or continuity, can lead to customer complaints that require a timely and appropriate response. Increasing public awareness as service users has increased the demand for professional, transparent, and accountable complaint handling in the water sector.

PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu of Indramayu Regency plays a strategic role in providing clean water services to the local community. Its existence is regulated by Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government and Government Regulation Number 54 of 2017 concerning Regionally-Owned Enterprises, which emphasize its dual responsibility as a public service provider and a professionally managed business entity (Juanda et al., 2025). Therefore, PERUMDAM is expected not only to ensure adequate water supply but also to effectively respond to customer complaints related to billing issues, pipe leaks, water quality, and service continuity.

Customer complaint records from the Sindang Service Unit show a high volume of complaints during 2023–2024, with a total of 883 reported cases. The majority of complaints related to billing issues (479 cases) and pipe leaks (388 cases), while complaints about water quality and service continuity were relatively minimal. The significant increase in billing complaints, from 200 cases in 2023 to 279 cases in 2024, indicates unresolved administrative and technical issues that pose significant challenges to service responsiveness (Administrator, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, service quality can be examined through five interrelated dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Setiono & Hidayat, 2022). When reliability is disrupted, particularly in essential services like water supply, responsiveness becomes a key mechanism for mitigating public dissatisfaction. Muneeb et al. (2023) argue that responsiveness goes beyond speed of response and includes a deep understanding of public needs and the organization's ability to proactively adapt service strategies.

Previous studies have shown that responsiveness in regional water supply services remains a persistent challenge. Research by Udeh (2024) revealed that limited human resources, coordination, and operational procedures hinder effective complaint handling and reduce customer satisfaction. These findings suggest that responsiveness issues are systemic and pervasive across all public water supply service providers.

Given the increasing number of customer complaints and the strategic importance of clean water services, examining the responsiveness of public services in handling customer complaints at the operational service unit level is timely and relevant. This study aims to analyze the responsiveness of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu in the Sindang Service Unit, identify factors influencing responsiveness, and explore efforts to improve complaint handling performance in regional water supply services.

2. Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted on the responsiveness of public services in the drinking water supply sector, particularly in the context of regional drinking water companies (PDAM/PERUMDAM). Responsiveness is considered a crucial indicator in assessing public service performance because it directly relates to an organization's ability to respond to public needs and complaints quickly, accurately, and with solutions. Several previous studies have shown that despite the availability of complaint channels, the responsiveness of drinking water services in various regions still faces structural and operational obstacles.

Research by Wandu & Mustofa (2024) on the responsiveness of PDAM services shows that while efforts to improve responsiveness to customer complaints have been made, they are still hampered by limited human resources, an unintegrated reporting system, and slow follow-up on complaints. This finding aligns with a study by Marbella et al. (2024), which revealed that limited human resources and the use of a manual reporting system are the main factors contributing to low responsiveness in handling customer complaints.

The focus on service responsiveness has also been examined in more specific contexts, such as the installation of new connections. Research by Dea et al. (2025) at the Tirta Bumi Wibawa Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) in Sukabumi City found a gap between ideal response times and actual service delivery. Although service was considered quite good, technical constraints and weak coordination between divisions led to delays in service delivery. This study demonstrates that responsiveness is determined not only by service intentions but also by system readiness and internal organizational coordination.

On the other hand, several studies have focused more on the general quality of public service. Latief and Fauzia (2022) in their study at the Tirta Kencana Regional Water Company (Perumdham) in Samarinda City showed that customer service quality was still suboptimal, particularly in terms of service speed and customer communication. Similar results were found by Purimahua et al. (2024) at the Tirta Yapono Regional Water Company (Perumdham) in Ambon City, who concluded that public service did not fully meet public expectations, particularly in terms of timeliness and coordination between work units. Although they did not specifically address complaint handling, these studies confirmed that responsiveness is a recurring weakness in regional water services.

The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction has also been extensively studied. Ali et al. (2024) found that the quality of service provided by PDAM Tirta Sejuk to meet clean water needs in Blangkejeren significantly influenced customer satisfaction, particularly through the dimensions of reliability and responsiveness. This finding is reinforced by research by Haryani et al. (2024) at PDAM Tirta Darma Ayu, which showed that weaknesses in information delivery and complaint handling remained factors inhibiting customer satisfaction. Although the primary focus of that study was customer satisfaction, the results indicated that responsiveness is a key element in improving public perception of service quality.

The development of technology-based public services has also received attention in recent studies. Alfarizi and Hasbullah (2025) examined the effectiveness of the "SiMayang" service application at Perumdham Tirta Mayang in Jambi City and found that the use of technology improved time efficiency and service access. However, technical constraints and low digital literacy among the public still limited the effectiveness of the service. This research demonstrates that technological innovation can support responsiveness, but it does not automatically resolve complaint handling issues if it is not balanced with the readiness of human resources and support systems.

Conceptually, responsiveness in public services is understood as an organization's ability to recognize community needs, prioritize services, and adapt service programs and actions to meet the aspirations of service users (Ahmed, 2024). Within the framework of service quality, responsiveness is one of the key dimensions of SERVQUAL, emphasizing the willingness and speed of staff to assist customers (Zeithaml in Hardiansyah, 2018). Responsiveness encompasses not only response speed but also accuracy, thoroughness, timeliness, and assurance that every customer complaint is handled thoroughly.

Various studies have also identified factors influencing the level of responsiveness in public services. Obicci (2025) emphasized that low employee awareness, weak work systems and procedures, ineffective task organization, limited revenue, low staff capacity, and inadequate service facilities are key factors hampering public service performance. Conversely, increased responsiveness can be driven by strengthening work awareness, compliance with regulations, clear organizational structure, improving human resource competency, and providing adequate facilities and infrastructure.

Based on a review of previous research and the aforementioned conceptual framework, it can be concluded that the responsiveness of public services in the drinking water supply sector still faces various challenges, both in terms of human resources, work systems, and supporting facilities. Although several studies have examined service quality and customer satisfaction, studies specifically focusing on responsiveness in handling customer complaints at the branch service unit level are relatively limited. Therefore, this study positions responsiveness as the primary variable analyzed through public service responsiveness indicators in the context of customer complaint handling at the Tirta Darma Ayu Water Company (PERUMDAM) Sindang Service Branch, Indramayu Regency.

Conceptually, this research's rationale stems from the community's basic need for reliable clean water services, which are then addressed by public service organizations through service mechanisms and complaint handling. The level of service responsiveness is influenced by various internal organizational factors, such as staff awareness, work systems and procedures, human resource capabilities, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure. Optimal responsiveness is expected to result in more effective public services, increase customer satisfaction, and strengthen public trust in drinking water service providers. The relationships between variables and the analytical flow of this research are presented systematically in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.

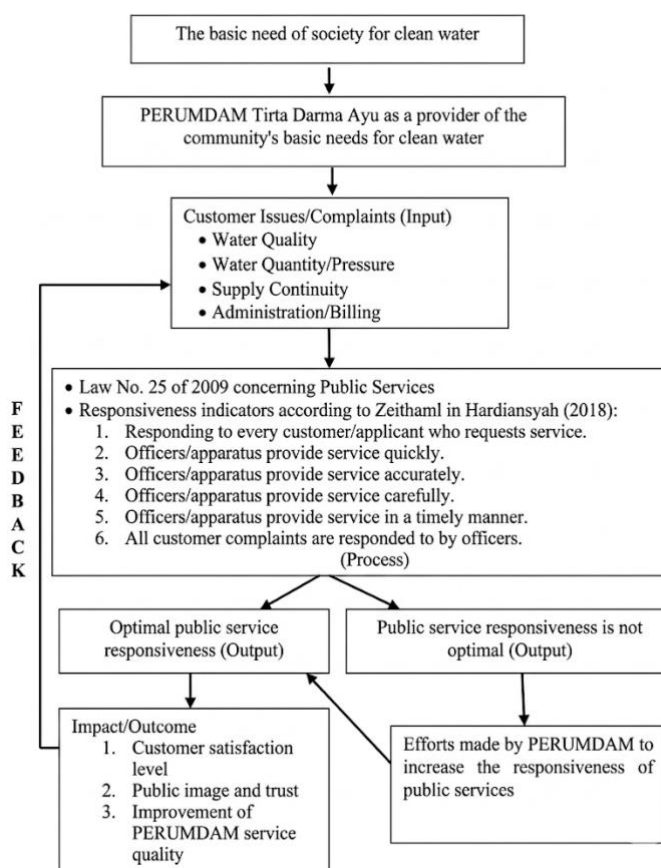


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Materials

The object of this research is the responsiveness of public service in handling customer complaints at the Tirta Darma Ayu Regional Drinking Water Company (PERUMDAM) in Indramayu Regency, focusing on the Sindang Service Branch. This service unit was selected based on its role as the frontline, interacting directly with customers and the high frequency of complaints related to clean water distribution services in the area.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from informants directly involved in the service process and handling of customer complaints. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, considering their involvement, experience, and knowledge of public service mechanisms at the service branch. Key informants included the Head of the Sindang Service Branch, the Head of Customer Service, and the Head of Technical Planning and Distribution. Primary informants consisted of customer service staff and customers of PERUMDAM's Sindang Service Branch, while additional informants came from technical planning and distribution staff. Secondary data were obtained from internal company documents and other supporting sources, such as customer complaint reports, public service regulations, and policy documents relevant to the provision of drinking water services. All of this data is used to provide a comprehensive picture of public service responsiveness practices in the service units studied.

3.2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of public service responsiveness based on the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of service providers with customers. The descriptive design was used to systematically describe the customer complaint handling process without manipulating the research variables (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to directly observe the service process and interactions between officers and customers. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather information regarding complaint handling mechanisms, the speed and accuracy of responses, and obstacles encountered in service delivery. Documentation was used to supplement the research data through a review of customer complaint documents and internal company reports. To increase the accuracy and depth of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques by combining various data sources and collection methods (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Asipi et al., 2022). Data reduction was carried out by sorting and focusing data relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data was then presented in a systematic narrative for ease of understanding. The final stage, drawing conclusions, was carried out gradually by continuously verifying the findings based on the empirical data and the theoretical framework used.

Data validity was tested through credibility testing using source, technical, and time triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from various informants; technical triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation; and time triangulation was carried out by checking data at different points in time to ensure the consistency of the information obtained (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Responsiveness of Public Service Delivery at the Sindang Service Branch

The Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu plays a strategic role as a frontline institution responsible for ensuring reliable water distribution while simultaneously addressing administrative services and customer complaints. The findings of this study indicate that responsiveness at the Sindang Branch is shaped by the interaction between regulatory mandates, operational procedures, organizational capacity, and human behavior in service encounters. Empirical evidence gathered through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis shows that service delivery at the Sindang Branch is generally oriented toward prompt response and customer accessibility. Front-office officers demonstrate readiness in receiving customers, providing initial explanations, and documenting service requests or complaints. This initial response reflects compliance with Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services, which emphasizes speed, accuracy, and non-discriminatory treatment as fundamental service principles. In practice, responsiveness is first manifested through immediate acknowledgment of customer presence and the availability of multiple complaint channels, both offline and online.

However, responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch cannot be understood solely as speed of response. The findings reveal that responsiveness also involves accuracy, carefulness, timeliness, and the assurance that every complaint is followed up until resolution. These dimensions align with the responsiveness indicators proposed by Zeithaml as cited in Hardiansyah (2018), which serve as the analytical framework of this study. The empirical

performance of each indicator varies, indicating that responsiveness is not uniformly achieved across all service processes.

From an operational perspective, the Sindang Branch relies on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to translate regulatory obligations into concrete service actions. SOPs regulate core services such as new household connection installation and customer complaint handling. The operational workflow for new household connections illustrates how administrative verification, technical surveys, cost estimation, payment, and installation are sequentially coordinated across units. This workflow is intended to ensure consistency and accountability in service delivery. The standardized operational flow of new household connection services is illustrated in Figure 2, which demonstrates the coordination between customer service units and technical divisions from application submission to installation completion.

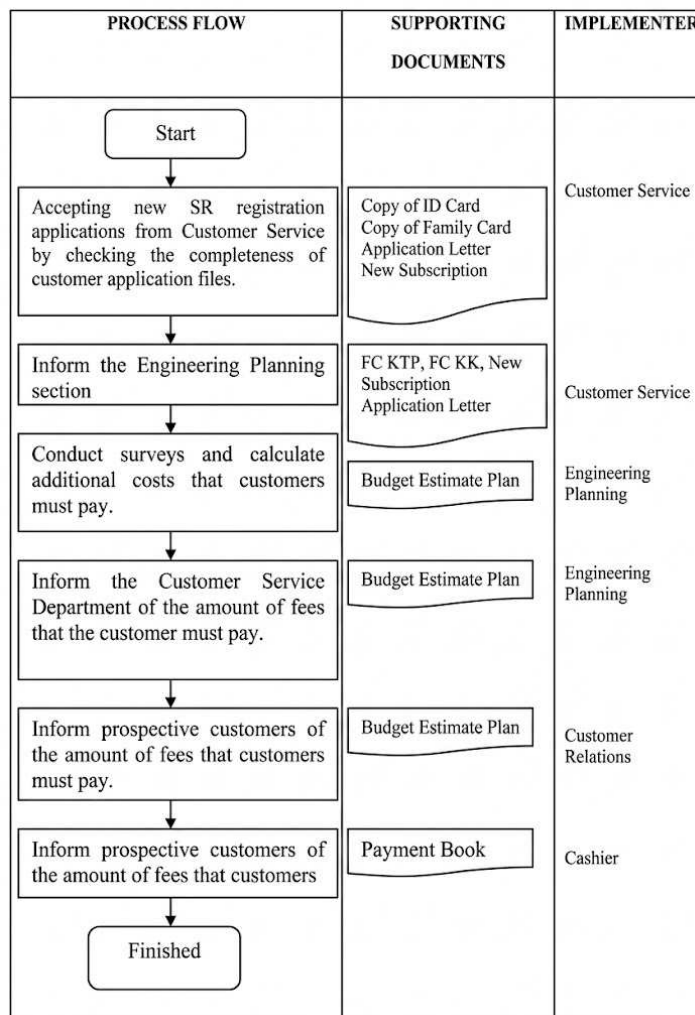


Figure 2: operational flow of new household connection installation

Despite the existence of SOPs, findings indicate that responsiveness is sometimes constrained by procedural rigidity and limited flexibility in implementation. For instance, collective procurement mechanisms for installation materials often delay service completion, even after customers have fulfilled administrative and financial requirements. This condition highlights a gap between formal procedures and customer expectations regarding service timeliness. To provide a structured overview of responsiveness performance, the empirical findings across the six responsiveness indicators are synthesized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of responsiveness indicators at the sindang service branch

Responsiveness Indicator	Empirical Description
Initial response to customers	Officers consistently welcome and acknowledge customers promptly
Service speed	Administrative services are generally fast; technical services vary
Accuracy	Verification mechanisms exist, but data discrepancies still occur
Carefulness	Attention to detail is present, though uneven staff competence affects consistency
Timeliness	Service completion times are defined but not always achieved
Complaint handling	All complaints are recorded and responded to, with varying resolution times

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that the strongest aspect of responsiveness lies in the initial response and complaint reception stages. Customers generally perceive officers as accessible, polite, and willing to assist, which contributes positively to service perception.

Conversely, the weakest dimensions of responsiveness are related to service timeliness and accuracy, particularly in technically complex cases. Discrepancies between administrative information provided at service counters and actual field conditions often lead to customer confusion and dissatisfaction. These inconsistencies are largely attributed to limitations in real-time data integration and uneven staff competence in interpreting technical information. The results demonstrate that responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch has been partially institutionalized as an organizational norm, especially in terms of initial response and complaint acknowledgment. Nevertheless, structural constraints such as procedural rigidity, limited human resources, and insufficient infrastructure support continue to hinder the full realization of responsive public service delivery. These findings provide a foundation for further discussion on the factors influencing responsiveness and the strategies required to enhance service quality in subsequent sections.

4.2. Regulatory Framework and Institutional Responsiveness

The responsiveness of public service delivery at the Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu is institutionally anchored in Indonesia's regulatory framework governing public services. Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services serves as the primary legal foundation that defines the rights of citizens and the obligations of service providers. This regulation emphasizes that public service institutions must deliver services that are fast, accurate, transparent, and non-discriminatory, thereby positioning responsiveness as a legal as well as an ethical obligation.

Empirical findings indicate that this regulatory mandate has been formally internalized within the organizational structure of the Sindang Service Branch. Service officers and managerial staff consistently refer to legal provisions as the normative basis for their actions, particularly in responding to customer complaints and service requests. Article 15 of Law Number 25 of 2009, which obliges service providers to deliver prompt and accurate services, is reflected in the practice of immediate customer acknowledgment at service counters and the availability of multiple complaint channels, including direct visits and digital platforms such as WhatsApp-based "*Unit Reaksi Cepat*" (URC).

In addition, Article 36 of the same law mandates that public service providers establish complaint-handling mechanisms managed by competent personnel. In practice, the Sindang Service Branch has complied with this requirement by assigning specific officers to record, categorize, and forward complaints to relevant technical units. This institutional arrangement demonstrates that responsiveness is not treated as an ad hoc activity but rather as a structured organizational function embedded within the service delivery system.

However, the findings also reveal a gap between regulatory ideals and operational realities. While regulations clearly define the obligation to respond, they provide limited guidance on concrete service completion timelines, especially for technically complex cases such as pipeline leaks or large-scale distribution disruptions. As a result, the interpretation of "prompt service" varies across units and depends heavily on managerial discretion and available resources. This ambiguity contributes to inconsistencies in service timeliness, as observed in the empirical data.

Beyond Law Number 25 of 2009, the institutional context of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu is further shaped by sectoral regulations governing water supply services, including Government Regulation Number 122 of 2015 on Drinking Water Supply Systems and Ministerial Regulation of Public Works and Housing Number 4 of 2020. These regulations emphasize service continuity, water quality, and system reliability, indirectly reinforcing the importance of responsiveness in handling service disruptions that directly affect daily life. In the Sindang Service Branch, these sectoral regulations are operationalized through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that guide technical responses to service complaints.

Despite this regulatory support, institutional responsiveness is constrained by organizational capacity. The findings show that compliance with regulations tends to prioritize formal response such as acknowledging complaints and documenting reports over ensuring timely resolution. This condition suggests that institutional responsiveness remains predominantly procedural rather than outcome-oriented. As noted by Zeithaml in Hardiansyah (2018), true responsiveness requires not only willingness to respond but also the capability to deliver solutions within a reasonable time frame. The regulatory framework provides a strong normative foundation for responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of institutional responsiveness depends on how these regulations are translated into operational practices supported by adequate human resources, clear service standards, and integrated information systems. The gap between regulatory expectations and service outcomes underscores the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms that move beyond compliance toward performance-based responsiveness, a theme that will be further examined in the discussion of influencing factors in the following section.

4.3. Operational Procedures and Service Responsiveness

Operational procedures are the primary mechanism that translates policy mandates and service standards into daily service practices. At the Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu, service responsiveness is primarily operationalized through the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Customer Complaint Handling, which regulates the administrative and technical flow of receiving, distributing, handling, and reporting customer complaints. This procedure is designed to ensure process traceability, clarity of role allocation, and accountability for each work unit involved.

Based on document analysis and field observations, the complaint handling process begins with the customer complaint being received by a service officer, whether it concerns non-flowing water, leaking pipes, or water quality. Each complaint is recorded in writing in the Customer Complaint Book and then incorporated into a Complaint Sheet as the initial document. This stage reflects the organization's initial responsiveness, as it ensures each customer complaint is formally documented and not overlooked.

Next, complaint information is forwarded to the Distribution or Administration Division, depending on the type of complaint submitted. This classification process aims to direct complaints to the unit with the relevant technical authority. At this stage, the Technical Complaint Sheet serves as the primary supporting document, serving as the basis for assigning and following up technical actions by field officers.

If equipment or material requirements are identified during the handling process, the technical officer instructs repairs and prepares a Proof of Goods Request (BPB). The distribution or technical officer then carries out repair work in the field and prepares a completion report. This stage demonstrates that service responsiveness is measured not only by the speed of complaint response but also by the organization's ability to coordinate resources to resolve customer issues.

The final stage of the complaint handling process is the completion time and tools used on the Technical Complaint Sheet, which is then summarized in the Technical Department's Monthly Report. This report serves as an internal evaluation tool to monitor complaint frequency, type of disruption, and the effectiveness of handling by the technical unit. This standard customer complaint handling flow is presented in Figure 3, which illustrates the functional relationship between customer service, administration, distribution, and technical management units.

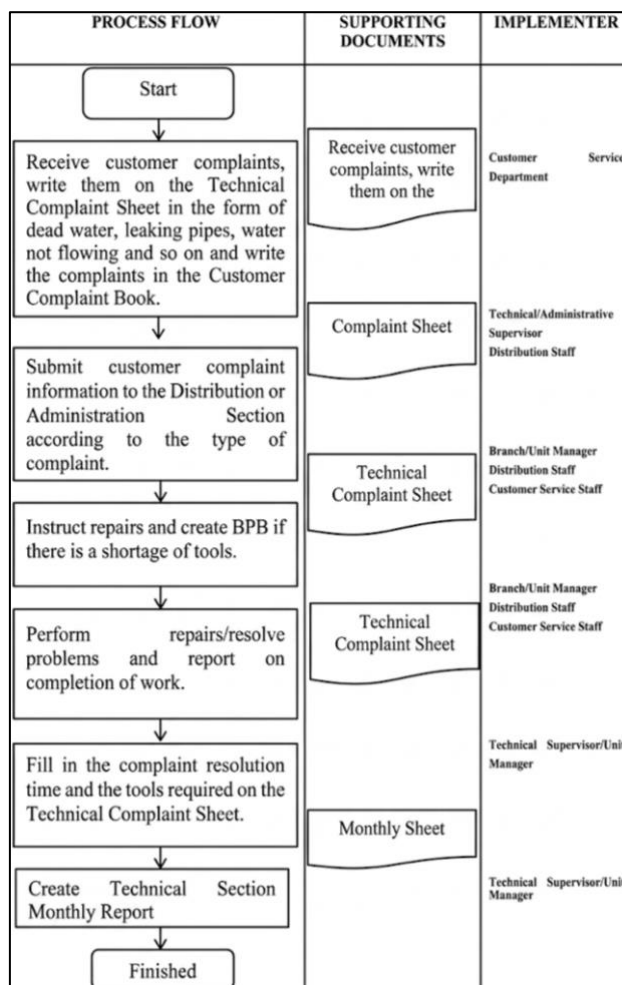


Figure 3: flowchart of pos customer complaint handling

Although the complaint handling POS provides a clear and documented workflow, empirical findings indicate that this procedure does not fully guarantee service responsiveness in terms of timely resolution. Complaints are generally acknowledged and recorded quickly, but resolution time depends heavily on the complexity of the problem, the availability of technical personnel, and field conditions. Minor problems, such as minor leaks or meter problems, tend to be handled more quickly than larger-scale technical issues that require cross-unit coordination and material procurement.

Furthermore, the lack of explicit service level standards within the POS creates uncertainty for customers regarding when their complaints will be resolved. This situation suggests that operational procedures are more strongly focused on supporting administrative responsiveness, such as recording, task allocation, and reporting, rather than results-based responsiveness, which emphasizes prompt and thorough problem resolution.

Table 2: Operational procedures and their implications for service responsiveness

Operational Aspects	Contributing to Responsiveness	Identified Limitations
Receiving and recording complaints	Ensuring early response and formal documentation	No direct impact on completion speed
Classifying and distributing complaints	Ensuring complaints are handled by the appropriate unit	Cross-unit coordination can potentially slow down the process
Implementing technical improvements	Providing substantive solutions to customer issues	Dependent on human resource and material availability
Monthly reporting and recapitulation	Supporting internal evaluation and control	Retrospective, not a real-time response

The findings in Table 2 indicate that operational procedures at the Sindang Service Branch emphasize procedural responsiveness over performance responsiveness. This condition aligns with the concept of responsiveness according to Zeithaml in Hardiansyah (2018), which emphasizes that the willingness to respond must be accompanied by the organizational capacity to resolve problems in a timely manner. The customer complaint handling POS at the Sindang Service Branch has provided an adequate structural foundation to ensure regularity and accountability of service. However, its effectiveness in improving responsiveness is still limited by variations in resolution times, limited technical resources, and the absence of clear service time standards. Therefore, improving responsiveness requires not only adherence to procedures but also strengthening operational flexibility, more adaptive cross-unit coordination, and setting measurable resolution time targets.

4.4. Empirical Assessment of Responsiveness Indicators

This section presents an empirical assessment of service responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu based on six indicators of responsiveness proposed by Zeithaml as cited in Hardiansyah (2018). These indicators include responsiveness in acknowledging service users, speed of service delivery, accuracy, carefulness, timeliness, and the assurance that all customer complaints are responded to. The assessment is grounded in qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and analysis of internal service documents.

The empirical findings demonstrate that responsiveness is not a single, uniform attribute but rather a multidimensional construct that manifests differently across service stages. Initial interactions between service officers and customers tend to reflect a high level of responsiveness, particularly in terms of acknowledgment and willingness to assist. Customers are generally greeted promptly, their needs are identified, and complaints are formally recorded. This initial responsiveness contributes positively to customer perceptions and aligns with the normative expectations of public service delivery as stipulated in Law Number 25 of 2009.

However, the findings also reveal variations in responsiveness across the subsequent stages of service provision. While administrative services such as complaint registration, data verification, and billing clarification are often handled quickly, technical services involving field intervention exhibit greater variability. Factors such as the complexity of technical issues, availability of personnel, and coordination between units significantly influence service outcomes. As a result, responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch tends to be stronger at the procedural level than at the resolution level.

Accuracy and carefulness represent another critical dimension of responsiveness. Empirical data indicate that verification mechanisms are in place to minimize service errors, particularly in billing disputes and meter reading verification. Nevertheless, discrepancies between administrative data and field conditions still occur, leading to customer dissatisfaction in certain cases. These discrepancies are primarily attributed to uneven staff competence and limitations in real-time data integration between administrative and technical units.

Timeliness emerges as the most challenging indicator of responsiveness. Although internal standards exist for service completion, they are not always explicitly communicated to customers, nor consistently achieved in practice. Delays are most frequently observed in new household connection installation and large-scale technical repairs. These

delays reflect structural constraints rather than individual negligence, highlighting the importance of organizational capacity in shaping service responsiveness.

To provide a concise overview of the empirical performance across all responsiveness indicators, the findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Empirical assessment of responsiveness indicators

Responsiveness Indicator	Empirical Evidence	Overall Assessment
Responding to service users	Immediate acknowledgment and formal complaint recording	Strong
Speed of service	Fast administrative handling; variable technical response	Moderate
Accuracy of service	Verification procedures exist; occasional data discrepancies	Moderate
Carefulness	Officers generally attentive; uneven staff competence	Moderate
Timeliness	Service standards exist but not consistently achieved	Weak
Response to complaints	All complaints are recorded and followed up	Strong

The synthesis presented in Table 3 indicates that responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch is strongest in the early stages of service interaction and complaint acknowledgment. The empirical assessment confirms that the Sindang Service Branch has developed a foundational level of responsiveness that meets procedural and regulatory requirements. However, achieving higher levels of responsiveness defined as timely, accurate, and fully resolved services requires improvements in operational flexibility, staff capacity, and inter-unit coordination.

4.5. Discussion: Strengths, Constraints, and Improvement Strategies of Service Responsiveness

The findings of this study demonstrate that service responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu reflects a combination of institutional strengths and persistent structural constraints, which are consistent with patterns identified in previous studies on public service delivery in the drinking water sector. Responsiveness, as conceptualized in the SERVQUAL framework, encompasses not only the speed of response but also accuracy, carefulness, timeliness, and the assurance that customer complaints are resolved effectively (Hardiansyah, 2018).

One of the main strengths identified in this study is the strong initial response and systematic acknowledgment of customer complaints. Service officers demonstrate readiness in receiving customers, providing preliminary explanations, and formally recording complaints through both offline and digital channels. This finding is in line with Wandu and Mustofa (2024) and Marbella et al. (2024), who found that accessible complaint channels and prompt acknowledgment contribute significantly to positive public perceptions of PDAM and PERUMDAM services. The institutionalization of responsiveness through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) further strengthens procedural accountability and ensures that complaints are not ignored, supporting the argument of Dea et al. (2025) that standardized workflows are essential for consistency in public utility services.

However, despite these procedural strengths, the study reveals notable constraints that limit effective service responsiveness, particularly in terms of timeliness and outcome achievement. Delays in technical services, such as pipeline repairs and new household connection installations, are recurrent issues. These findings corroborate earlier research by Udeh (2024) and Purimahua et al. (2024), which identified limited technical personnel, coordination challenges, and operational rigidity as major barriers to timely service delivery. Procedural rigidity related to centralized procurement and material distribution further weakens service timeliness, a condition also highlighted by Marbella et al. (2024), who emphasized that rigid administrative systems often undermine practical responsiveness.

Accuracy and carefulness also emerge as moderate constraints in service responsiveness. Although verification mechanisms exist, discrepancies between administrative data and actual field conditions still occur, leading to customer dissatisfaction. Similar issues were reported by Latief and Fauziah (2022), who found that uneven staff competence and weak internal coordination negatively affected service quality in regional water companies. These findings reinforce the view of Zeithaml in Hardiansyah (2018) that responsiveness requires not only willingness to respond but also reliable information systems and competent human resources to ensure accurate service delivery.

Based on the convergence between this study's findings and prior empirical evidence, several improvement strategies can be proposed. First, the establishment of clear and measurable service-level standards, particularly for technical services, is essential to strengthen timeliness and manage public expectations. This strategy aligns with Alfarizi and Hasbullah (2025), who demonstrated that clearly defined service timelines supported by digital platforms enhance service efficiency and responsiveness. Second, strengthening human resource capacity through continuous administrative and technical training is necessary to improve service accuracy and carefulness, as emphasized by Obicci (2025). Third, enhancing inter-unit coordination through integrated information systems would facilitate real-time data sharing and faster decision-making, supporting findings by Haryani et al. (2024) on the role of digital platforms in improving public service performance.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the responsiveness of public service delivery in handling customer complaints at the Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu, Indramayu Regency. The findings indicate that service responsiveness has been procedurally institutionalized and generally reflects compliance with the normative framework of public service provision in Indonesia. Responsiveness is most evident in the initial stages of service interaction, particularly in customer acknowledgment, accessibility of complaint channels, and systematic complaint recording. These aspects demonstrate that the service unit has established a foundational level of responsiveness aligned with the principles of Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services.

However, the study also reveals that responsiveness at the Sindang Service Branch remains predominantly procedural rather than outcome-oriented. While complaints are consistently received and documented, their resolution is not always completed within a predictable timeframe. Timeliness emerges as the weakest dimension of responsiveness, especially in technically complex services such as pipeline repairs and new household connection installations. Constraints related to procedural rigidity, limited technical personnel, uneven staff competence, and insufficient integration between administrative and technical units continue to hinder effective service resolution. Accuracy and carefulness in service delivery are supported by existing verification mechanisms, yet discrepancies between administrative data and field conditions persist. These inconsistencies highlight the importance of strengthening human resource capacity and improving internal coordination to ensure that information provided to customers reflects real-time operational conditions. The findings confirm that service responsiveness is influenced not only by staff willingness but also by organizational capacity, operational flexibility, and system integration.

In conclusion, although the Sindang Service Branch of PERUMDAM Tirta Darma Ayu has demonstrated commitment to responsive public service delivery at the procedural level, achieving fully responsive and citizen-oriented services requires a strategic shift toward performance-based responsiveness. Strengthening service-level standards, enhancing human resource competence, improving inter-unit coordination, and leveraging integrated information systems are essential steps to improve service timeliness and accuracy. These efforts are expected to contribute to higher customer satisfaction, increased public trust, and more sustainable performance in regional drinking water service delivery.

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