

A Review of Effects of Quality Municipal Services on Citizen Satisfaction in Malaysian Municipal Council: A Content Analysis

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Abstract

Government was established primarily to provide services that will make life worth living to their citizens. Accordingly, local governments as third tier government in Malaysia are created to bring government closer to the local communities' at the grassroots and for transformation of lives at the rural level. One of the ways of bringing government closer to the people at the grassroots is through the delivery of service in a satisfactory, timely, effective and adequate manner. This paper is therefore an examination of Local Government and Municipal Service Delivery in Malaysia. It argues that the constitutional mandate of local council in terms of "function performance" has not been translated into reality in many occasions. Thus, the paper concludes and recommends that municipal council must attempt to overcome the challenges that have by-passed their performance. It is only by this can they be positioned to render cutting services in a timely, effective, adequate, prompt and satisfactory manner to justify their continuous existence and huge financial allocations to them. Municipal awareness also gives a sense of satisfaction of the citizens. The study recommends that there is needs for local municipal to be strategies to makes the local council more robust for enhancing the lives of inhabitants and to foster good relationship between the management and local people in the area. The study also gives recommendation of enlighten the local community on the important of community participation in provision and maintenance of public service delivery.

Keywords: Government; Municipal services; Local community; Citizen satisfaction

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Introduction

Globalisation has intensified the level of antagonism in the national and international market. Not only does the internal macroeconomic organization and atmospheric setting need to be reinforced, however, fundamentals of the micro economy including the particular economic and social segments and local organisations' also need to be made more robust and resilient [1]. In order to improve and stimulate global, best practice and competitiveness, the machinery of law and order should continue to promote the evolution to money value projects and activities in three key economic sectors, production, social services and agriculture [2,3]. However, low level municipal services are detriment to healthy and adequate citizen satisfaction, Malaysia as a country of different and multifaceted culture and norms,

their local government has been through a rapid developmental and infrastructural changes in relations to technological advancement [4,5]. The effectiveness of municipal services in various local government and councils were ascertain through the local community expression of satisfaction [6,7]. Citizen satisfaction based on the commitment of the local government foster peaceful coexistence of different ethnic group in a given locality [8,9]. Therefore, citizen satisfaction and municipal services are key element of local government functionality [10,11].

Significance of the study

A study of this nature is significant in a number of respects. Firstly, the paper is timely and in accordance with national priority. Social service delivery since the inception of democratic governance in Malaysia has been a subject of national debate and

concern. For instance, in attempt to improve service delivery of public institutions, [12] notes the as government actors dedicate ourselves to providing the basic services to which each citizen is entitled in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner. Government's commitment at improving service delivery in Malaysia at federal, state and local government levels should be listed as priority because Malaysian have for too long been feeling inadequate satisfaction by the quality of public service delivery by which decisions are not made without undue outside influence, and files do not move without being pushed with inducements.

Secondly, the study is significant because it will expand the frontier of knowledge by identifying factors influencing service delivery in Malaysian Local Government Areas. These factors when clearly identified will go a long way in providing answers to questions like why service delivery has not improved in Malaysian local government councils despite huge financial allocations from the Federation Account. Furthermore, the research is justified on the grounds that its recommendations will enhance policy decisions of government agencies like the Local Government Service Commission. In addition, members of the public will find the paper an educative and resource material. Future researchers on service delivery in Malaysian Local Government Areas will find the study a rich resource material for their research. A study of this nature is a training ground for the conduct of cutting edge research in the field of Public Administration and Local Government Studies.

Municipal councils in Malaysia

There are 39 municipal councils in Malaysia which are accountable for providing public goods and services to every group of people that live within their localities. The greatest contribution provides by the local government is by performing efficient and effective service delivery, predominantly to those who currently have little access or even no access to these services. Therefore, the local authorities in Malaysia power expanded with a complete set of functions and responsibilities within the Local Government Act of 1976. The Local Government Act 1976 (Act 171) empowered the right to embark on varies of tasks and have also merged frameworks for local authorities. The planning powers of local authorities stipulated in the allied Town and Country Planning Act 1976. The Act stated that the local authority shall be the local planning authority for their area, thus, allowing the local authorities to control the developmental functions of urban management and play a more dynamic role in the national development [13,14]. The functions of local authorities in Malaysia covers a mandatory functions such as the licensing authority, authority for waste and refuse collection, street lighting and activities pertaining to public health and also discretionary functions that include all development functions such as providing amenities and recreational parks [15,16]. The major functions of Malaysian local authorities can be summarized as conservational, public, social and developmental [17-19]. The local government or local authority (Kerajaan tempatan or pihak berkuasa tempatan (PBT)) is the lowermost level in the system of government in Malaysia afterward the federal government

and states government. It has the capacity to collect taxes (in the form of assessment tax), to make laws and rules (in the form of by-laws) and to grant licenses and permits for any business in its area of jurisdiction as in providing basic amenities, collecting and managing waste and refused, as well as arrangement and developing the area under its jurisdiction (Local Government Act 171). Local governments are under the exclusive purview of the state governments as provided in the Constitution of Malaysia, except for local governments in the federal territories. The Federal Ministry of Housing and Local Government play a role in coordinating the practices of local governments across the country. Local governments commonly referred to as councils (Majlis), headed by a civil servant with the title President (Yang Di- Pertua) for rural districts and municipalities, and Mayor (Datuk Bandar) for cities, though there are a few exceptions in the form of unique and altered local authorities (Table 1).

The table above shows the states and the number of municipal councils. It shows that there are 39 municipal councils in Malaysia. Johor and Selangor has the highest number of municipal councils that is 6 (15%) respectively, follows by Perak 4 (10%), then Kedah, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, Pahang, Sabah, and Sarawak with 3(8%) each. It is a general knowledge that population trends make creates municipal service delivery problems [20,21].

Citizen or customer satisfaction with municipal services in municipal council

The position of local government in Malaysian Federalism is the lowest levels of government hierarchy, which is mandated for the provision of social services in the local or grassroots level [22]. Citizen wants and needs are to be met before any project that of insignificant to the local communities, to enhance people's standard of living is the real thing that motivated them to participated with local government in service delivery [23,22]. Local communities have this hope. They want local councils to spend time and resources for their lives improvement. satisfaction for and from services render by local government as different dimension i.e., tangible and intangible [24-29]. Both the local communities and service providers were in need

Table 1 States and the number of their municipal councils.

States	Number of Municipal councils	% of Municipal Councils in the Country
Perlis	1	3
Kedah	3	8
Penang	1	3
Perak	4	10
Selangor	6	15
Negeri Sembilan	3	8
Malacca	3	8
Johor	6	15
Pahang	3	8
Terengganu	2	5
Kelantan	1	3
Sabah	3	8
Sarawak	3	8
Total	39	100

of mutual cooperation for smooth running of local affairs. Meanwhile, satisfaction has a relationship with quality municipal services. Customer or citizen satisfaction is very important for any organizational achievement most especially public sector [24,25,22]. Thus, municipal council establishment is not merely for profit making from their customers. In an increasing competitive and liberalized global quality service provisioning, the competition to attract and retain local and tourist citizens and customers is likely to increase. In the future, more foreign players are likely to enter into Malaysian service provisioning, thereby pushing local council to innovate and compete more aggressively in developing products and services. Although, there is a difference between municipal council and local authorities, they are nonetheless competing in the same market in terms of offering complementary products and services [30]. By declining the standard of living of citizens below a certain brink, the development of the community starts to slow down, even to undesirable levels. So, it is concluded that the fundamental objective of municipalities is not economic success, but the wellbeing and satisfaction of their inhabitants [31].

Determinant of citizen satisfaction with municipal services

Citizen satisfaction determines the level of activeness of local government couple with citizen awareness of municipal services. Creation of activities and expansion of same lead local council to better place for residents. Local government service delivery process goes beyond simple activities, determinants of the services are associated with the area and the people living within the local government [32]. But potential determinants are carefully chosen and grounded on extensive literature review from four categories: economic, social, demographic, and natural [33]. To expedite economic development cities are forced to make attractive for investors and creativities by investing in infrastructure, facilities and the development of attractive sites for new business enterprises [34-36]. Furthermore, the recognized determinants vary with cosmopolitans but present some similarities. Economic growth, industrial development, and economic structural transformation are the key economic determinants. Population and labor growth, population urbanization, and population structure act as essential demographic determinants [37,38]. Primary social determinants include infrastructure construction, energy consumption, and real estate development, while dominant natural determinants are the amount and topology of available land [39]. In many cases citizen satisfaction appears to be bottle neck to local administrators' as they showcase their ability to generates cordial relation with the inhabitants are contributing to fragmentation and segregation, they are socially exclusive and barely leave space for non-commercial activities [40]. Drastic changes in society: fast urbanization, changes in the relation between the urban and the rural, globalization, economic changes and the need for more sustainable solutions for spatial problems the themes of the other sessions in the conference all lead to new urban forms or new forms of urbanism [41]. The determinants for citizen satisfactions were government sincerity, municipal awareness, facilities maintenance and timeliness of

service provisioning [30]. Self-esteem, Optimism and innovation are the determinant of municipal service delivery success from management point of view, and policy awareness and community participation are prime factors for municipal service satisfaction from local community point of view [42].

Provisioning of quality municipal services and utility

The provision of quality municipal services and utility should be regarded in terms of satisfying the demand of the inhabitants and supporting the growth of the local communities as well as contribution to the affordability of the precise township [31]. Quality municipal services and utility need to be adequately provided in good state of quality, sufficient distribution, and be of highly quality that uses the latest technology [43]. The provision of quality municipal services and utility should be coordinated with the hierarchical level and function of the area [44]. In municipality areas, the supply of utilities such as drainage system and public toilet should be of sophisticated standard to meet the requirements of value-added and best practices [45]. More again, these facilities need to have an effective level of management and facilities maintenance with good back-up services to reduce interruption during service [46].

For an efficient municipal service delivery, the main strategy is to widen its coverage and improve the quality of service by ensuring the sustainability and cost efficiently of maintenance. Major municipal services such as refuse collection, sewerage disposal, drainage, cleansing and sanitation of public places should be provisioned widely and be of high standard [47]. This will improve the lives of inhabitants as well as increase the attractiveness of the municipal area. For more proficient and effective management of domestic run-off, the existing sewerage system needs to be improved in addition to the construction of new facilities [48]. The participation of the local community for municipal service needs to be fortified to assist the local authority in administering and managing the municipal area. Effective service delivery is the key function of the local council, even though, Malaysian government have already allocates resources to local government for smooth running of government at lower levels [49].

Utilities and infrastructures needs to be of high standard and lives of inhabitants be enhanced by providing services at appropriate time [50], people's needs and wants are supposed to be of great important to local council target for service delivery [1]. The expediency for the existence of local government anywhere in the world stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots. Within this understanding, local governments were created in Nigeria as a third tier of government to ensure effective, measurable and efficient service delivery to rural communities [51]. Some of the services expected from local government authority include housing, water, rural electricity, roads and transport, health facilities. Local governments are also required to bring about local economic development through the implementation of various initiatives [52]. As a consequence, local government authorities have to be able to identify and

target the neediest communities, have systems in place to track expenditures on projects and be able to determine if the allocation of resources has had an impact on the lives of local inhabitants [53,54].

The purpose of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of quality municipal services on citizen's satisfaction in Malaysian municipal council. This research is important in line with the obvious cross-cultural and awareness differences among citizens' and the process of delivering municipal services.

Material and Methods

It is universal agreement that there are two methods of data collection; primary source and secondary sources of data. In the case of this research, secondary data collection was used to gathered information. It was known globally that textbooks, thesis, journal articles, newspapers, statutory and non-statutory documents comprise the secondary sources for data collection. It is not different with this research study; all sources of secondary data collection were consulted rigorously to obtain enough data. Content analysis was used to analysed the data at hand. Special consideration was given to recent research articles on the relevant studies such as study of [55-58]. These are some of literatures consulted for proper understanding of the research context.

Discussion of Results

The results obtained from this results shows that many municipal councils in Malaysia provide services at satisfactory level but improvement is needed to attained the level of overall satisfaction of the citizens. This is in agreement with the study of [59,60]. The results indicated that more efforts by the municipal councils are puts in place to achieved desire needs of the populace [61] but it is not in agree with [62], this may be in connection with years of findings. However, recent development in service delivery in many municipal councils revealed that citizens' needs and wants are being taking care of as opined in [63-65]. Apparently, citizens' needs and wants is keep on changing due to time and socio- cultural advancement which makes municipal councils administrators faced different challenges [66,44]. These results oppose the assertions that finances are the main problems municipal councils in Malaysia were encountered with [67,43], but most countries of the world most especially developing countries were faced with financial crisis to discharged their statutory functions [68]. The results of this research also

revealed that quality municipal services have an effect on citizen satisfaction as supported [7].

Conclusion

This research study concludes that municipal service delivery in Malaysia is satisfactory. The study also shows that there is relationship between municipal service delivery and citizen satisfaction. Municipal awareness also gives a sense of satisfaction of the citizens. The effects of quality municipal services on citizen satisfaction is enormous as indicated above. Generally, citizens are of the opinion that quality municipal services give them sense of belongings with their municipals administrators. The study also concludes that municipal awareness on the rights and obligation of the citizens to participates in service delivery.

Recommendation

The study recommends that there is needs for municipal councils to be strategies to makes the service delivery processes more robust for enhancing the lives of inhabitants and to foster good relationship between the management and local people in the area. The study also gives recommendation of enlighten the local communities on the important of community participation in provisioning and maintenance of public service delivery. The study also recommends that citizens participation in terms of presenting their complaints should be enhanced to enable the local communities contributes toward development of their locality. Municipal council's administrators should establish public complain office where the citizens should be lodging them with complains on the service delivery. The research also recommends that proper record of inspection of facilities provided should be taken.

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