

Customer Satisfaction towards Public Service Delivery at Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Sungai Petani, Kedah

Norasheda Bt Abdul Wahab and Nur Fazidah Bt Mohd Razi

Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi
MARA (UiTM) Merbok, Kedah

ABSTRACT

Many health organizations are currently moving to offer their service effectively to the customers. However, providing excellent services to the customers is not an easy task since service delivery in the hospital may require a dynamic composition of a number of elementary services in an organization. This study empirically examines the factors of customer satisfaction towards healthcare public service delivery from the perspective of consultation, accessibility, courtesy, information and redress (remedy failures). This research is conducted in order to investigate customer satisfaction in Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Kedah and a questionnaire was distributed to the customers that received health services. Hence, this research will lead to initiatives to enhance public service delivery to provide the best quality of service that is faster, better and more flexible services to the customers

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Health care, Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Kedah, Service delivery

INTRODUCTION

In the provision of health care delivery, patients' satisfaction towards the health care they received becomes a priority issue. It is because satisfied patients are more likely to seek and comply with prescribed treatment regimes (Taylor and Benger, 2004). However, in reality, the quality of health

care service delivery in Malaysia is criticized by the general public. For example, health care service providers are facing so many problems like a decline in the perceived quality of health care provision, deteriorated quality of services, and waiting time. It is due to the brain drain phenomenon of highly qualified and trained medical personnel (Pillay, 2005).

Besides that, even though Malaysia boasts of having a healthcare facility within every 5 km radius especially for the easy access of rural folk, not all are equipped with adequately trained staff (Gomez and Jomo, 1999). More than that, in the rural and more mountainous or remote and less accessible river-bound or jungle regions, the deployment of facilities and manpower is uneven. This shows that there remains great disparity and inequitable distribution of health care personnel, especially doctors at the less accessible regions (Quek, 2008). This research is conducted in order to investigate the customer satisfaction towards health care service delivery especially in Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Kedah.

In the context of this research, Batho Pele principles refer to the South African official national document on public services that is being formulated in order to improve public service delivery especially in the country, including the health care services (Khoza, 2005). This study will focus on customer satisfaction towards public service in Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Kedah with reference to the delivery of services based on principles in the Batho Pele which are the principles of consultation, accessibility, courtesy, information and redress (remedy failures).

In order to achieve customer satisfaction, organizations must be able to satisfy their customers' needs and wants. Senver, Rompf and Severt (2007) define customer satisfaction as consumer's judgment that she or he has reached a point of fulfillment. It is the judgment that a product or services feature, the product or service itself has provided a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfillment. Public service delivery is concerned with the provision of a product or service, by a government or government body to a community that it was promised to, or which is expected by that community (Riekert, 2001). Therefore, customer satisfaction with public service delivery refers to the customers feeling of fulfillment towards provision of product or services by the government. In this research,

customer satisfaction with health care service delivery is being assessed from the principles of service consultation, service accessibility, service provider courtesy, service information provision and service provider remedy failures.

Service consultation is one of the interests of employees in hospitality operations that are largely concerned with the improvement of customer service quality (Lashley, 1995). Public service in the health care sector must regularly and systematically consult the customers about the service currently provided and provision of new basic services. Service consultation thus, will give customers opportunity to influence decision about public services provided to them, foster more participative and cooperative relationship between the customers and service provider (Skweyiya, 1997). Customer satisfaction in consultation is assessed in terms of whether communities are consulted about the service they require, and whether they are involve in policing (Mofomme and Barnes, 2004).

Besides that, according to the Report on the Evaluation of Performance and Compliance with the Batho Pele Principle of Access (2007), the principle of service accessibility aims to ensure that government services are known and are easily accessible to members of the public. One major factor that affects public service accessibility is geography. According to Mofomme and Barnes (2004), accessibility is assessed in terms of whether the public service provider place and location are easy to find and within the reach of the customers. It is also assessed on whether it is accessible to all people either healthy, disabled or the elderly and whether the service provider provides facilities that are customer friendly and consequently how it will affect customer satisfaction.

In the context of health care, public service employees are a very important aspect in the public service delivery as they are the persons who come into regular contact with the public. The lack of courtesy and sympathy of many public employees will only reduce the quality interaction with the citizens that can affect the satisfaction of customers in public service delivery. Therefore, courtesy and regard for the public is one of the fundamental duties of public servants to the public as customers who are entitled to receive the highest standards of service (Skweyiya, 1997).

Moreover, information is one of the most powerful tools for the customers to exercise their right to better services. Citizens should be given full, accurate and up-to-date information about the services they are entitled to receive and the service provider must ensure that the information is received by the customers who are entitled to them and those who need it (Russell and Bvuma, 2001; Skweyiya, 1997).

Based on the Report on the Evaluation of Performance and Compliance with the Batho Pele Principle of Redress (2006), redress or remedy failures entails that if the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy, and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic and positive response.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to examine the factors of customer satisfaction with the public service delivery. It sets to identify the relationship between the factors of customer satisfaction namely service consultation, service accessibility, service provider courtesy, service delivery information provision and service provider remedy failures with public service delivery.

The respondents for this research are the customers that obtain health care services located at Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Sungai Petani, Kedah. For this study, the target total population is patients in Sungai Petani, Kedah that have 400 patients in April 2010. So, the sample size is 196 based on population size (Uma, 2006).

Data Collection

All data and information required for this research is gained from the questionnaires answered by customers that required health services at

Hospital Sultan Abdul Halim, Sungai Petani Kedah. The questionnaire is constructed in English and Malay for the understanding of customers. The respondents for this study are selected by using the convenience sampling method.

The questionnaire distributed to the customers consisted of seven sections. The first section contains demographic questions which gather information on background of the customer regarding demographic factor like gender, age, race, marital status, and highest level of education, occupation, and income status per month, frequency to hospital per month and transportation to hospital. The second section contains questions related to the independent variable of this study which is service consultation. While, the third section contain questions related to the service accessibility. Section four consists of service provider courtesy. Section five consists of public service delivery information provision and the sixth section is on service delivery remedy failures. Furthermore, the seven sections consist of question related to the dependent variables of overall customer satisfaction with public service delivery.

This research used a five-point Likert scales in measuring service that may range from strongly dissatisfied to strongly satisfy. A numerical code is assigned to each scale where strongly dissatisfied is assigned a code of “1”, code of “2”, dissatisfied, code of “3”, neutral, code of “4”, satisfied and code of “5” strongly satisfied.

Data Analysis

All the data gained from the questionnaire where analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 16.0). Data analysis of this research applied Descriptive Analysis to reduce the raw data into a summary format. In order to examine the hypotheses that have been supported, the Pearson product-moment correlation matrix was obtained for the five independent and dependent variables. For frequency distributions for the demographic variables, Cronbach’s alpha was be obtained to determine the reliabilities of the measurement for this research.

RESULT

The significance of this study is to reveal the factors that lead to customers satisfaction toward service delivery that provided by the public sector. The result of this study is expected to provide relevant information and knowledge regarding the customer satisfaction towards public service delivery that will in turn improve service delivery by making it more responsive. Moreover, this study is also expected to bring the awareness to the customer regarding the level and quality of public service that they receive and make suggestion on how public sector can enhance their service delivery in order to give greater satisfaction to the customers. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between independent variables which are service consultation, service accessibility, service courtesy, service information and service redress (remedy failures) with customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study hopes to give significant benefits to the performance of public service delivery that can give better satisfaction to the customers that receive the good service. In order to achieve quality public service delivery in an organization, commitment from employees and support from all level of management is necessary (Abdullah and Rozario, 2009). It is important that evaluation on the health care system be conducted to identify and raise the standard and quality of care, to improve accountability, to improve responsiveness to patients, to monitor health care seeking behavior, to improve patients' compliance with care, and also to improve outcomes of care (Irwin and Bamber, 1984). Thus, hopefully this study will give an impact to the public sector regarding the citizens' satisfaction with the quality of service they provide.

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