



THE ROLE OF THE FRONT OFFICE IN IMPROVING PERSONNEL SERVICES IN THE REGIONAL CIVIL SERVICE AGENCY OF NORTH SULAWESI PROVINCE

Gabriella Cherin Watupongo¹, Johny Revo Elia Tampi², Very Y. Londa³

¹²³ Development Resource Management Study Program, Postgraduate, Sam Ratulangi University, Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia

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gabriellawatupongoh@gmail.com

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ABSTRAK

Pelayanan kepegawaian merupakan fungsi strategis dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan daerah karena berkaitan langsung dengan pengelolaan sumber daya aparatur dan kualitas kinerja Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN). Front office Badan Kepegawaian Daerah Provinsi Sulawesi Utara berperan sebagai garda terdepan dalam memberikan layanan kepegawaian, sehingga kualitas pelayanan yang diberikan sangat mempengaruhi persepsi ASN dan masyarakat terhadap profesionalisme serta kinerja birokrasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran front office dalam meningkatkan pelayanan kepegawaian di BKD Provinsi Sulawesi Utara dengan menggunakan Model *Service Encounter* dari Bitner sebagai kerangka analisis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan dokumentasi. Informan penelitian berjumlah 12 orang yang terdiri dari pimpinan, pegawai BKD Provinsi Sulawesi Utara, serta ASN di luar BKD sebagai pengguna layanan. Penentuan informan dilakukan dengan teknik

purposive sampling berdasarkan keterlibatan langsung dalam proses pelayanan kepegawaian, khususnya pada layanan front office. Analisis data dilakukan secara interaktif melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran front office dalam meningkatkan pelayanan kepegawaian dapat dianalisis melalui tiga dimensi utama, yaitu lingkungan fisik (*physical environment*), perilaku petugas (*employee behavior*), dan interaksi pelanggan (*customer interaction*). Pada dimensi lingkungan fisik, front office telah berfungsi sebagai pintu masuk utama pelayanan, namun masih menghadapi keterbatasan fasilitas, seperti belum tersedianya sistem antrian digital, keterbatasan ruang tunggu, serta minimnya dukungan teknologi informasi sehingga pelayanan masih banyak dilakukan secara manual. Pada dimensi perilaku petugas, pelayanan umumnya telah menunjukkan sikap ramah, sopan, dan menjunjung etika pelayanan publik, meskipun masih terdapat kendala dalam konsistensi responsivitas serta penguasaan informasi teknis lintas bidang. Sementara itu, pada dimensi interaksi pelanggan, BKD Provinsi Sulawesi Utara menunjukkan komitmen terhadap pelayanan yang adil, transparan, dan bebas dari praktik KKN, namun masih ditemukan hambatan komunikasi, waktu tunggu yang relatif lama, serta keterbatasan akses informasi layanan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan peran front office melalui peningkatan fasilitas fisik, pemanfaatan teknologi pelayanan, pengembangan kapasitas petugas, serta perbaikan sistem informasi dan mekanisme umpan balik sangat penting untuk meningkatkan kualitas pelayanan kepegawaian dan mendukung terwujudnya tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik.

Kata Kunci: Front Office, Pelayanan Kepegawaian, Service Cncounter, Perilaku Petugas, Interaksi Pelanggan

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: gabriellawatupongoh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Personnel services constitute a strategic function in regional governance, as they are directly related to the management of human resources and the performance quality of civil servants. The front office of the Regional Civil Service Agency (Badan Kepegawaian Daerah/BKD) of North Sulawesi Province serves as the primary gateway for personnel services, making its service quality a key determinant of civil servants' and the public's perceptions of bureaucratic professionalism and performance. This study aims to analyze the role of the front office in improving personnel services at the BKD of North Sulawesi Province by employing Bitner's Service Encounter Model as the analytical framework. This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. A total of 12 informants participated in the study, consisting of leaders and staff of the BKD of North Sulawesi Province, as well as civil servants outside the BKD who act as service users. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in personnel service processes, particularly those related to front office services. Data analysis was conducted interactively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the role of the front office in enhancing personnel services can be examined through three main dimensions: physical environment, employee behavior, and customer interaction. In terms of the physical environment, the front office has functioned as the main entry point for services; however, it still faces several limitations, including the absence of a digital queuing system, limited waiting space, and insufficient information technology support, resulting in service processes that remain largely manual. Regarding employee behavior, services are generally delivered in a friendly and courteous manner and adhere to public service ethics, although challenges remain in maintaining consistent responsiveness and in mastering cross-sector technical information. Meanwhile, in the customer interaction dimension, the BKD of North Sulawesi Province demonstrates a commitment to fair, transparent, and corruption-free services; nevertheless, communication barriers, relatively long waiting times, and limited access to service information are still evident in practice. This study concludes that strengthening the role of the front office through improvements in physical facilities, the utilization of service technology, capacity building for service personnel, and the enhancement of information systems and feedback mechanisms is essential to improving the quality of personnel services and supporting the realization of good governance.

Keywords: Front Office; Personnel Services; Service Encounter; Employee Behavior; Customer Interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of bureaucratic reform and digitalization of government administration, improving the quality of public services is an inevitable demand. Bureaucratic reform in Indonesia is directed at simplifying business processes, improving the quality of public services, improving the professionalism of state civil servants (ASN), and utilizing information technology as an enabler in the administration of government. This effort aims to realize an effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable bureaucracy, and be able to provide services that are responsive to the needs of the community and internal government employees (Dwiyanto, 2011; Ministry of PANRB, 2020; Osborne, 2010).

One form of innovation in improving the quality of public services is strengthening the role of *the front office* as the main means in the implementation of administrative services, including personnel services. *The front office* is a leading service unit that serves as the starting point of interaction between the organization and service users. In the context of personnel services, *the front office* plays an important role in providing accurate information, ease of access to services, speed of administrative completion, and supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure. The quality of service provided by *front office officers* greatly affects the perception and level of satisfaction of service users, especially ASN and other related parties (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2014; Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016).

The front office has a strategic role because it is the front line that is in direct contact with



employees and visitors. According to Kasavana and Brooks, the *front office* is a department that functions as a customer entry and meeting point with the organization, while also being responsible for handling customer needs, requests, and complaints quickly and efficiently. In the context of modern bureaucracy, the role of the *front office* is no longer just administrative, but also strategic in building an organizational image and supporting the realization of quality public services (Kasavana & Brooks, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 2018).

Along with the development of government digitalization, strengthening the function of the *front office* is not only interpreted as a face-to-face service provider, but also as part of an integrated service system. Service digitization does not solely move services to online platforms, but includes human resource readiness, adaptive work culture, and data and system integration that strengthens bureaucracy to be simpler and less convoluted (Heeks, 2006; World Bank, 2016). In personnel services, the *front office* functions to provide information, manage personnel administration, and assist in the settlement of matters related to employee rights and welfare. The quality of this role has a direct effect on employee satisfaction and has an impact on the overall performance and productivity of the organization (Sedarmayanti, 2017; Wibowo, 2016).

As the first point of interaction, the *front office* plays an important role in creating a good *first impression* for employees and visitors. Positive or negative impressions formed in the early stages of service can affect the perception of the overall performance and effectiveness of the organization. Therefore, the *front office* not only functions as a receptionist or provider of administrative information, but also as a service center that is able to provide solutions to personnel problems easily, quickly, and accountably. This is in line with the principles of good public service and supports effective, efficient, and accountable ASN management as reflected in the Core Values of ASN BerAKHLAK (Hardiyansyah, 2018; Sinambela, 2017).

However, while the role of the *front office* is crucial, many government organizations still face various challenges in optimizing these functions. One of the efforts developed to answer these challenges is the application of the concept of one-stop staffing services. This concept aims to simplify bureaucratic flows, improve administrative efficiency, and ensure transparency and accountability of services. Through one-stop service, the personnel service process is expected to be more integrated, fast, and accurate so that it can increase employee satisfaction and trust in government institutions (Dwiyanto, 2015; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

The Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province has strategic duties and functions in supporting the implementation of local government in the field of personnel. This agency acts as a center for coordination, synchronization, and integration of personnel administration services through the collection, compilation, and processing of personnel data and information. This role is an important part in supporting the improvement of the quality of public services within the North Sulawesi Provincial Government (Sedarmayanti, 2017; Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2023).

Based on the results of the Ombudsman's assessment of the implementation of public services, the North Sulawesi Provincial Government in 2024 will receive the first best title with a score of 98.63 in the assessment of compliance with public service standards. This assessment includes five special locations, namely the One-Stop Investment and Integrated Services Office, the Regional Health Office, the Regional Education Office, the Social Service, and the ODSK Hospital. Although the Regional Civil Service Agency is not explicitly listed in the assessment location, its contribution can be seen from improving the quality of personnel services and employee administration that supports the overall performance of the organization (Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).



However, in its implementation, personnel services have not been fully run optimally without the support of a well-organized front office. When the *front office* function does not run effectively, both in terms of speed and accuracy of service, the availability of waiting room and consultation room facilities, service accessibility, and the quality of human resources, one-stop staffing services will also experience obstacles (Moenir, 2010; Ratminto & Winarsih, 2016).

Based on the results of initial observations, there are still a number of problems in the implementation of personnel services at the North Sulawesi Provincial Regional Civil Service Agency, including uneven human resource readiness, not optimal *front office* officer competence, service culture that is not fully user-oriented, and limited supporting facilities and infrastructure. This condition shows that the quality of human resources and facility support are key factors in determining the effectiveness of public services (Hardiyansyah, 2018; Sinambela, 2017).

In addition, despite efforts to simplify procedures, there is still a perception among employees that the personnel administration process tends to be complex and time-consuming. Convoluted procedures have an impact on the length of service completion time and affect employee satisfaction levels. The limitation of physical facilities and information technology is also an obstacle in providing optimal services, especially when there is an increase in the number of visits (Moenir, 2010; Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2014).

On the other hand, although the transparency of service procedures has improved, there are still shortcomings in terms of communication and clarity of information. The lack of clear information about administrative procedures and personnel policies can cause confusion among employees and negatively impact the perceived quality of service (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016).

Based on this description, it is important to study in depth the role of *the front office* in supporting the success of personnel services, especially in the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province. This study is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive overview of the actual condition of *front office* services and be the basis for the formulation of strategic recommendations in order to improve the quality of professional, effective, and service-oriented personnel services (Dwiyanto, 2015; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

Previous research shows that the improvement of the quality of public services and staffing is greatly influenced by system innovation, service user satisfaction, and human resource competence, especially in frontline service units. Research by Muh. Fatlullah Baqi Bando (2023) analyzed the implementation of the Personnel Notification Information System (SINOKEN) application innovation at the Regional Office IX BKN Jayapura with a qualitative approach using Steelman's innovation implementation theory, which found that the success of innovation is influenced by individual factors, structure, and organizational culture, although there are still obstacles to implementation alignment due to the limitations of technological infrastructure in certain regions.

The research of Sulistiyowati, Ruru, and Londa (2022) used a descriptive quantitative approach to measure the level of public satisfaction with public services at the Manado City Civil Registration Office, which shows that community satisfaction is significantly influenced by the quality of service, although there are still other factors outside the variables studied. Furthermore, Rosawatiningsih's research (2019) highlights the competence of front office in improving services at KPP Madya Surabaya with a qualitative approach and Spencer's competency theory, which concludes that front office competence plays an important role as a vanguard in creating an organizational image and providing excellent service. In contrast to these studies that tend to focus on system innovation, user satisfaction levels, or individual competence partially, this study places the use of front office in personnel services as the main focus by examining more



comprehensively aspects of human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and service processes in supporting the success of one-stop personnel services at the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province.

The front office is the leading part of an organization that functions as the starting point for direct interaction between institutions and service users, both the public and employees, so that it has a strategic role in shaping the perception of the quality of public services. Conceptually, front office comes from the word *front* which means front and *office* which means office, which is operationally interpreted as a work unit that handles all service activities that are in direct contact with service users, including providing information, receiving guests, managing administration, and handling complaints (Kasavana & Brooks, 2005). In the context of public service institutions, the front office is the most accessible service space and has a high intensity of interaction, so it functions as a representation of the organization's performance and image. Front office performance reflects the level of effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out service tasks in a friendly, fast, accurate, and professional manner, which is in line with the concept of performance as the result of work achieved by individuals or groups in accordance with organizational responsibilities and goals (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016).

Public services themselves are a series of government bureaucratic activities in meeting the needs of the public for goods and services in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations, which place state apparatus as public *servants* (Dwiyanto, 2011). The performance of public services, including in front office units, can be measured through indicators of productivity, service quality, responsiveness, responsibility, and accountability, which not only assess the final results of services, but also the process and interaction between apparatus and service users and their impact on public trust (Dwiyanto, 2015). From the perspective of service and service marketing, Bitner emphasized that the quality of service is highly determined by *service encounter*, which is a moment of direct interaction between service users and service providers involving officer behavior, physical environment, and service systems and procedures, thus shaping customer perception of the quality of service received (Bitner, 1990; Shostack, 1985). Therefore, in the context of personnel services at the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province, the front office does not only function as an administrative space, but as a strategic service center that integrates human resource competencies, support facilities and infrastructure, and accountable service processes to realize quality public services.

Service is essentially a non-physical activity that aims to meet the needs of other parties through the provision of quality services, where the quality of service is reflected in the conformity between the expectations of users and the performance of the services received. In the context of government, public services are a manifestation of the state's function as a public servant which aims to provide easy access, justice, and satisfaction of the basic rights of citizens (Sinambela, 2011). The quality of public services is not only determined by the final result of the service, but also by the process of its delivery, which involves attitudes, behaviors, communication skills, and the competence of the apparatus (Grönroos, 1984). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) emphasized that the quality of service can be measured through five main dimensions of SERVQUAL, namely physical evidence (tangibles), reliability (reliability), responsiveness (responsiveness), assurance (assurance), and empathy (empathy), which together form the public's perception of the professionalism and humanity of the service. Thus, quality public services require an integration between the technical competence of the apparatus (technical quality) and the quality of the service interaction process (functional quality), because even though the results of the service are in accordance with the standard, public satisfaction

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: gabriellawatupongoh@gmail.com



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2. RESEARCH METHODS

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province is located in the vicinity of the North Sulawesi Governor's Office, Jalan 17 Agust No. 69, Manado. This agency has main tasks including the implementation of secretarial administration and the management of apparatus development affairs, mutation and personnel status, coaching and welfare of apparatus, planning and utilization of apparatus, functional position groups, and the implementation of other tasks given by the leadership. The vision and mission of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province are aligned with the Vision and Mission of the Governor and Deputy Governor of North Sulawesi for 2025-2029, namely "Towards Advanced, Prosperous and Sustainable North Sulawesi", which is described into eight regional development missions. Based on its duties and authority, the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province specifically plays a role in supporting the achievement of the seventh mission, which is to improve good governance.

The description of the research data shows that the research informants amounted to 12 people consisting of leaders and staff within the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province and State Civil Apparatus outside the agency. The determination of informants is carried out using *the purposive sampling technique*, which is the deliberate selection of informants based on considerations of the informant's ability, experience, and knowledge of the research object. The informants were chosen because they were considered able to provide relevant and in-depth information, especially related to the role and performance of the front office in improving the quality of personnel services at the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province.

The discussion in this study is based on the *Service Encounter Model* developed by Bitner, which is used as a conceptual framework to analyze the role of the front office in improving

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: gabriellawatupongoh@gmail.com



staffing services. This model emphasizes that service quality is determined by direct interaction between service providers and service users, which is reflected through three main dimensions, namely the *physical environment*, *employee behavior*, and *customer interaction*. The physical environment includes ease of access to services, including the use of digitalization and the availability of comfortable waiting rooms; the behavior of the officers including the speed of administrative services, the accuracy and accuracy of information, as well as the attitude and friendliness in serving; Meanwhile, customer interaction reflects the function of the front office as a provider of personnel information, a communication center and complaint handling, as well as the representation of an organizational image that directly affects employees' perception of bureaucratic performance.

The findings of the research results are that:

- a) The physical environment of the front office of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province plays an important role as the starting point of interaction between apparatus and service users. The results of interviews and observations show that in general, the condition of the front office space is quite good in terms of cleanliness, neatness, ease of access to the location, and the existence of visual information of services. However, the limitations of waiting rooms, lighting, the number of seats, and the lack of optimal use of service technology such as digital queuing systems and special front office computer devices are still obstacles that affect the comfort and efficiency of services, especially when the number of visitors increases.
- b) Front office *employee behavior* in general shows a fairly friendly, responsive, and service-oriented attitude, although there are still some shortcomings such as late attendance of officers at the beginning of service hours. The results of the interviews indicated that the front office officers tried to provide services in a humane manner, helped service users even outside the main duties, and explained administrative procedures quite clearly. Professional behavior, good communication, and caring of officers have been proven to have a great influence in building trust, reducing service user anxiety, and creating a positive service experience.
- c) Customer *interaction* in the front office shows the commitment of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province in providing fair, transparent, and free services from KKN practices through a one-stop service system. However, the results of the interview also revealed that the limited number and competence of front office officers meant that service information could not be fully provided directly, so service users often had to wait for the relevant field officers. This condition has an impact on the length of service time and decreased comfort, especially when the waiting room is crowded. Therefore, increasing the capacity of human resources, utilizing information technology, and providing complaint facilities are important needs to strengthen the quality of customer interaction and improve the role of the front office as a whole.

The role of the front office in improving personnel services is a strategic element that directly affects the quality of services received by the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). This discussion is based on the concept of *Service Encounter* developed by Bitner, which views service as the result of interaction between service users and service providers, both through officers and support facilities and infrastructure. In this context, the role of the front office is analyzed through three main aspects, namely the physical environment, officer behavior, and customer interaction. The physical environment is the initial stimulus that shapes the perception of service users towards the professionalism of the organization, where the condition of the service room, layout, lighting, cleanliness, comfort of the waiting room, and service technology support affect



the comfort, clarity of the service flow, and the work efficiency of officers.

In addition to the physical environment, officer behavior and the quality of customer interaction are key factors in determining the quality of personnel services. The behavior of officers is reflected in the speed and accuracy of service, communication skills, friendly attitude, and empathy in responding to the needs of service users, which is supported by technical competence regarding personnel procedures and systems. Customer interaction, both face-to-face and technology-based, is at the core of *service encounters* because it involves information exchange, consultation, and service problem solving. These three aspects are interrelated and form the overall service experience, so that the front office plays an important role in creating effective, professional staffing services, as well as increasing the trust and credibility of the agency.

a. Physical Environment

The front office of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province serves as the main entrance in personnel services for all State Civil Apparatus (ASN). However, based on the results of observations and interviews, the implementation of services in the front office still faces various obstacles in the physical environment aspect. The problems found include the lack of an integrated service queue system so that the queue process is still carried out manually, the limited number of tables and waiting chairs, and the lack of support for information technology devices such as computers or laptops for the front office, printers, and digital information boards. This condition causes some service processes to not fully run in accordance with the flow and procedures that have been set.

The limited waiting space and supporting facilities have a direct impact on the comfort of service users. Under normal conditions, the number of ASN who come every day ranges from 10-15 people, even more if counted with visitors who go directly to their respective field rooms. As a result, waiting seats in the front office area are often insufficient, while the variety of service needs served is quite diverse. In addition, the implementation of manual service patterns, such as asking the needs of guests one by one and directing directly to related fields, shows that the function of the front office as an integrated service center has not been running optimally, especially because there is no adequate computer equipment available in the front office area.

Nevertheless, the physical environment still has an important role in supporting the quality of personnel services. As the first space accessed by ASN, the physical condition of the front office is a representation of the professionalism of the Regional Civil Service Agency as a whole. Good spatial planning, adequate lighting, clear movement paths, and the availability of service information through banners or printed forms can help create a more efficient service flow and reduce confusion for service users. A well-organized environment also contributes to reducing the stress level of visitors, especially when taking care of important and sensitive personnel documents.

From the aspect of accessibility, the location of the front office which is easy to reach from the entrance of the building has provided convenience for visitors. However, there is still a need to improve support facilities for people with disabilities as well as the provision of clear signboards and service information to strengthen ease of access and disclosure of information. In addition, security and safety aspects such as the existence of CCTV, fire extinguishers, and safe spatial planning are also important parts in creating a sense of security and increasing trust in service users. Overall, continuous improvement of the physical environment of the front office is needed so that personnel services can take place faster, orderly, and professionally, while increasing the satisfaction and trust of civil servants in the performance of the Regional Civil Service Agency of

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: gabriellawatupongoh@gmail.com



North Sulawesi Province.

b. *Employee Behavior*

The behavior of front office officers is the main determinant in the quality of public service delivery, especially in the Regional Civil Service Agency which has a strategic function in managing regional personnel management. From the perspective of public administration, officer behavior is an important indicator of bureaucratic professionalism because direct interaction between officers and service users forms an initial perception that greatly affects the legitimacy and credibility of the organization. Therefore, the quality of officer behavior cannot be positioned as a complementary aspect, but as a fundamental component that determines the success of the delivery of personnel services.

Within the North Sulawesi Provincial Regional Civil Service Agency, the behavior of front office officers reflects the implementation of bureaucratic ethical values and public service principles, such as responsiveness, accountability, and transparency. Time discipline is one of the real indicators of officer accountability, which is reflected in timely attendance and readiness in providing services to ASN. This disciplined attitude not only has an impact on the smooth service process, but also strengthens public perception of the organization's commitment to meeting the service standards that have been set.

The communication aspect plays an important role in supporting the quality of service behavior. Front office officers are required to have clear, systematic, and easy-to-understand communication skills so that service users gain a complete understanding of procedures, requirements, and personnel service flows. Humanistic and persuasive communication helps minimize misinformation while increasing service accessibility, especially for civil servants who have limitations in understanding technical administrative procedures. In this context, officers not only function as conveyors of information, but also as facilitators who ensure that the needs of service users are met.

In addition, adaptive and empathetic behavior is an important characteristic of quality public services. Front office officers are often faced with various problems that are not always in accordance with the main duties and functions of certain work units. The ability to remain courteous, provide appropriate direction, and coordinate service users with related areas reflects effective bureaucratic coordination practices. Empathy and willingness help to show that staffing services are not solely administrative, but also contain a social dimension that demands sensitivity to the needs of service users.

From the perspective of public administration ethics, the behavior of front office officers is a reflection of normative values such as justice, equality, decency, and integrity. These values are reflected in a non-discriminatory attitude, respect for the dignity of every service user, and a commitment to providing fair service regardless of background or position. Overall, the behavior of the front office officers of the North Sulawesi Provincial Regional Civil Service Agency plays a strategic role in forming a positive service experience, increasing ASN's trust in institutions, and supporting the realization of good governance.

c. *Customer Interaction*

Customer interaction at the front office service of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province shows dynamics that reflect the quality of the relationship between officers and service users, which is built through communication, responsiveness, accessibility, and service ethics. Based on the results of interviews and observations, normatively the institution has shown a commitment to providing services that are fair, transparent, and free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism practices. This commitment is realized through the implementation of a one-stop service system, the provision of standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the guarantee of equal access to services for all civil servants and the community. In policy, this step has been in line



with the principles of modern public service that emphasizes integrity, accountability, and equality.

However, at the implementation level, the quality of interaction between front office officers and service users does not fully reflect the expected standards. The effectiveness of communication is still a major issue, especially related to the clarity of information regarding administrative requirements and estimated service completion time. Some service users revealed that the information presented did not always answer their specific needs, thus creating uncertainty. From a theoretical perspective, this condition shows the existence of a *communication gap*, which is a mismatch between the information conveyed by the officer and the understanding received by the customer. The limited technical knowledge of front office officers in certain field affairs also affects the quality of communication and the depth of information provided.

Service responsiveness is also a challenge in customer interaction. Although front office officers show a cooperative attitude and willingness to serve, the service process is often hampered by reliance on the presence of employees from related technical fields. As a result, the wait time becomes relatively long, especially when the number of service users increases. This suggests that the responsiveness dimension—which includes speed, accuracy, and responsiveness to customer needs—has not been consistently realized. Internal workloads and service systems that are still manual also strengthen obstacles in creating efficient service interactions.

From the aspect of accessibility, there is a gap between the goal of one-stop service and the reality on the ground. The limited competence of officers, the unpreparedness of supporting documents, and the lack of feedback facilities such as complaint boxes or service processing information media cause service users to still face obstacles in obtaining services easily and quickly. Ideal accessibility should allow service users to obtain information and services without repetitive additional procedures, but this condition has not been fully realized in the front office of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province.

However, in terms of service ethics, customer interactions in general have taken place without discrimination. The informants assessed that services were provided equally, by maintaining data security and upholding the principle of integrity. This shows that the values of fairness and professionalism have become part of the culture of service. However, the absence of a formal complaint mechanism limits the process of evaluation and continuous improvement of the quality of customer interactions.

Overall, customer interaction at the front office of the North Sulawesi Provincial Regional Civil Service Agency reflects a strong institutional commitment to the implementation of public services, but still faces obstacles in terms of communication, responsiveness, and accessibility. This condition emphasizes the need to strengthen the capacity of front office officers, provide more comprehensive service information, and develop effective feedback facilities so that customer interactions can take place more optimally, accountably, and oriented to the needs of service users.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the front office of the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province has a strategic role in improving the quality of personnel services as the front line of public services. This role is reflected through the three dimensions of the *Service Encounter Model*, namely the physical environment, officer behavior, and customer interaction. The physical environment of the front office has functioned

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: gabriellawatupongoh@gmail.com



as the main entrance to services, but it still faces limitations in facilities and infrastructure, such as the unavailability of a digital queue system, limited waiting rooms, and lack of information technology support, so that services are still running manually and less efficiently. In terms of officer behavior, the service in general has shown a friendly, polite, and upholding public service ethics, but there are still obstacles to the consistency of responsiveness and mastery of technical information across fields. Meanwhile, customer interaction shows an institutional commitment to fair and transparent service, but in practice there are still communication barriers, relatively long waiting times, and limited access to information that affect the comfort and satisfaction of service users.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province carry out continuous improvements to the physical environment of the front office through improving facilities and utilizing service technology to support efficiency and comfort. In addition, strengthening the capacity of front office officers through service communication training, understanding of cross-field personnel procedures, and improving internal coordination needs to be done to improve the quality of service behavior. The development of a clearer, more accessible service information system, and the provision of a structured complaint and feedback mechanism are also important to improve the quality of customer interaction. These efforts are expected to strengthen the application of *good governance principles* and increase the trust of civil servants and the public in the quality of personnel services at the Regional Civil Service Agency of North Sulawesi Province.

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