

Building Customer Loyalty through Service Quality and Satisfaction: A Study at PDAM KCP Sei Agul

Membangun Loyalitas Pelanggan melalui Kualitas Layanan dan Kepuasan: Studi pada PDAM KCP Sei Agul

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai bagaimana variabel Kualitas Layanan dan Kepuasan Pelanggan memengaruhi Loyalitas Pelanggan pada perusahaan PDAM KCP Sei Agul. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menyebarkan kuesioner secara daring kepada 30 responden yang dijadikan sampel dalam penelitian ini. Data dianalisis dengan bantuan SPSS versi 25 menggunakan pendekatan regresi linier berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variabel Kualitas Layanan dan Kepuasan Pelanggan berpengaruh secara parsial terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan. Namun, kedua variabel tersebut tidak memiliki pengaruh secara simultan terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan.

Kata Kunci: Kualitas Layanan, Kepuasan Pelanggan, Loyalitas Pelanggan

Abstract

This study aims to assess how the variables of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction influence Customer Loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul. The research method used is a quantitative approach by distributing online questionnaires to 30 respondents who served as the sample for this study. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 with a multiple linear regression approach. The results of the study indicate that both Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction variables have a partial effect on Customer Loyalty. However, these variables do not have a simultaneous effect on Customer Loyalty.

Keywords: Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty

1. Introduction

In an era of increasingly intense competition, service providers are required not only to deliver basic services but also to build long-term relationships with their customers. One of the key strategies to achieve this is by improving service quality to generate satisfaction, which ultimately leads to customer loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Lopiyoadi, 2016). This approach is relevant not only in the private sector but also in public service institutions such as Regional Water Companies (PDAM), which play a crucial role in providing essential services to the public.

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Service quality is a major factor that affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Companies that can deliver services that meet or exceed customer expectations tend to generate higher levels of satisfaction (Lupiyoadi, 2016; Aditi & Hermansyur, 2018). In the context of PDAM, service quality involves not only the smooth distribution of clean water but also responsiveness to complaints, clarity of information, and technical reliability in resolving service disruptions. When customers feel acknowledged and receive quick resolutions to their issues, satisfaction increases and the likelihood of remaining loyal to the service provider becomes higher (Huriyati, 2015; Abdurrahman, 2015).

PDAM KCP Sei Agul, as a provider of clean water in Medan City, has implemented various efforts to improve service quality, including pipe repair, air valve flushing, and improved complaint handling. However, despite a consistent increase in the number of active customers over the years, a significant number of inactive customers still exists. This phenomenon indicates a challenge in maintaining customer loyalty despite service improvements. It is therefore necessary to further investigate whether these quality improvements have had a meaningful impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Several previous studies have shown a positive relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. For instance, research by Sudjianto and Japariato (2017) in the hospitality sector, and studies by Ramadhani and Abdurrahman (2023) in education, confirm that good service quality can drive loyalty through customer satisfaction. Similarly, Prasetyo et al. (2023) and Marifah et al. (2022) highlight the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and loyalty. However, most of these studies were conducted in commercial contexts, while empirical studies focused specifically on PDAM remain limited.

Although recent studies by Dewi and Mursyidah (2022) and Effendi et al. (2024) have started to explore public service settings such as PDAM, they have not thoroughly examined the impact of technical service quality and complaint handling on customer loyalty. Thus, this study is both relevant and urgent in addressing this research gap. Furthermore, the study brings novelty by highlighting technical service aspects that are often overlooked, even though they are crucial in shaping customers' perceptions of overall service quality.

By examining the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul, this research aims to offer practical contributions to developing more effective and responsive service strategies. Moreover, the findings of this study could serve as a basis for policy-making in other regional water companies facing similar customer retention challenges. As public demand for high-quality service increases, PDAM must transform into a customer-oriented public service institution.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction and its subsequent impact on customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul. The study also aims to assess the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and loyalty. Therefore, this research not only offers theoretical insights but also provides practical solutions for improving the service performance of public utility providers.

Overall, by combining the concepts of service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty within the context of public service at PDAM, this study is expected to broaden the scientific understanding in service management. Furthermore, the findings can serve as a valuable reference for academics, practitioners, and policymakers who seek to improve public service delivery that is high in quality and customer-focused.

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Basis: The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty

Service quality plays a crucial role in shaping customer loyalty. Service quality is defined as the totality of features and characteristics possessed by a product or service that reflect its ability to satisfy stated or implied customer needs. This definition places the emphasis clearly on the customer's perspective. A company is said to deliver quality when its products or services meet or exceed customer expectations. Service quality represents a paradigm of evaluation from consumers who receive services from companies, particularly in public service sectors such as PDAM. The quality aspect is essential for companies to attract new customers as well as retain existing ones, preventing them from switching to competitors (Darsono, 2010).

Several studies have found a significant and positive influence of service quality on customer loyalty. For instance, Fatimah et al. (2022) confirmed that service quality directly affects customer satisfaction and indirectly impacts loyalty. Similarly, Effendi, Mardani, and Wijayanto (2024) demonstrated that digital service quality significantly improves loyalty when mediated by consumer trust and satisfaction. These findings align with Darsono's (2010) emphasis on the pivotal role of perceived service quality in influencing loyalty through trust and satisfaction as mediating variables.

The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction is a fundamental factor driving customer loyalty. Satisfaction is defined as the feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from the comparison between perceived product or service performance and expectations. When customers perceive that the services they receive fulfill or exceed their expectations, satisfaction occurs, which fosters loyalty. In the context of PDAM, customers who receive prompt responses, reliable water distribution, and ease of service access tend to remain loyal to the company (Dewi & Mursyidah, 2022).

Empirical evidence supports the positive correlation between satisfaction and loyalty. For example, Winton et al. (2023) emphasized that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty. Fornell, Mithas, and Morgeson III (2006) confirmed that customer satisfaction results in long-term behavioral consequences such as repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth, which reinforce customer loyalty.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework, the hypotheses formulated in this study are:

- H1. Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul, Medan City.
- H2. Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul, Medan City.
- H3. Service quality and customer satisfaction together have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul, Medan City.

These hypotheses are grounded in prior research findings. For example, Prasetyo et al. (2023) found a strong association between service quality and customer satisfaction in PDAM services. Pahlawan et al. (2019) indicated that both product and service quality improve satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, Rofiaty and Hidayatinnisa (2024) highlighted the combined role of service quality and health awareness in enhancing loyalty through satisfaction.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach, where data collection is conducted through surveys by directly distributing questionnaires to respondents. The sampling method used is probability sampling, which requires knowledge of the population size and assumes that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. In this study, the sample size was determined using Isaac and Michael's table with error margins of 1%, 5%, and 10%. Given a population of 30 customers from PDAM Tirtanadi Sei Agul, a 10% margin of error was applied, resulting in a sample size of 30 respondents.

The research focuses on describing the phenomenon related to service quality, customer satisfaction, and their influence on customer loyalty. Data sources include both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected using questionnaires and interviews conducted with PDAM customers, providing firsthand information about their experiences and perceptions. Secondary data were obtained from company publications, official reports, articles, and relevant literature, supporting the analysis with contextual and theoretical insights.

Data collection techniques comprised administering questionnaires using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 with yes/no questions, conducting interactive interviews with selected respondents to deepen understanding, and direct observations to validate the data gathered from questionnaires and interviews. This multi-method approach enhances the accuracy and reliability of the information collected.

For data analysis, the researcher compiled, classified, interpreted, and described the data to provide a clear picture related to the research questions. Descriptive analysis was used to present the data without generalizing the results. Hypothesis testing was performed by examining path coefficients and conducting t-tests to determine the significance of relationships between variables. The statistical analysis was facilitated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

4. Results and Discussion

Participant Description

This study involved 30 employees from various divisions of the Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Tirtanadi KCP Sei Agul, aged between 18 and 40 years. The majority of participants had a minimum educational background of vocational high school (SMK/SMA) or equivalent and had worked for at least three months. Data collection was conducted qualitatively through a Google Form questionnaire distributed between March 13 and March 24. The selection criteria were based on the respondents' willingness to participate in financial management activities.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

To obtain an overview of the data, descriptive statistics were calculated for the key variables: Service Quality (X1), Customer Satisfaction (X2), and Customer Loyalty (Y). The descriptive statistics included mean, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation values. Results showed that Service Quality scores ranged from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 30, with a mean of 23.37 and a standard deviation of 5.382. Customer Satisfaction ranged from 8 to 20, with a mean of 16.17 and a standard deviation of 0.312. Customer Loyalty scores ranged from 11 to 30, with a mean of 23.67 and a standard deviation of 4.795.

Classical Assumption Tests

- **Normality Test:** Normality was tested using two methods: the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and graphical analysis via histograms and P-P plots. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.067, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the data distribution is normal. Histogram and P-P plot visualizations confirmed this, showing a normal distribution pattern and data points closely following the diagonal line, satisfying the normality assumption for regression analysis.
- **Multicollinearity Test:** The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values were used to assess multicollinearity between independent variables. Service Quality (X1) and Customer Satisfaction (X2) both showed VIF values of 2.043 and tolerance values of 0.490. Since the VIF values are below 10 and tolerance values are above 0.10, the data are free from multicollinearity issues.
- **Heteroskedasticity Test:** Scatter plot analysis of residuals showed points spread randomly without any clear pattern, indicating no signs of heteroskedasticity. This suggests the variance of residuals is constant across observations.
- **Autocorrelation Test:** Using the Run Test method, the autocorrelation test resulted in an Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value of 0.832, which is greater than 0.05. This confirms that there is no autocorrelation problem in the dataset, meaning the residuals are independent across observations.

Hypothesis Testing

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Table 1 shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Linear Result				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	3.226	2.298		1.404
Service Quality	0.569	0.118	0.639	4.802
Customer Satisfaction	0.429	0.193	0.296	2.229

Based on the data in Table 1, the regression equation used in this study is as follows:

$$\text{Customer Loyalty} = 3.226 + 0.569 (\text{Service Quality}) + 0.429 (\text{Customer Satisfaction}) + e$$

- The constant coefficient is 3.226 with a positive sign. This indicates that if the independent variables (Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction) have a value of zero, the predicted value of the dependent variable (Customer Loyalty) is 3.226.
- The regression coefficient for Service Quality (X1) is 0.569, which is positive. This means that if the value of Service Quality increases by 1%, Customer Loyalty increases by 0.569 units, assuming other factors remain constant.
- The regression coefficient for Customer Satisfaction (X2) is 0.429, also positive. This implies that a 1% increase in Customer Satisfaction leads to a 0.429 increase in Customer Loyalty, holding other variables constant.

Partial Test (t-test)

The t-test is used to determine whether there is a significant effect between the independent variables and the dependent variable partially. The t-table value is determined by referring to the t-distribution with a significance level of $0.05/2 = 0.025$ for a two-tailed test and degrees of freedom $df = n - k - 1 = 30 - 2 - 1 = 27$, where k is the number of independent variables. Thus, the critical t-value is 1.70.

Table 2. presents the t-test results for each independent variable

Variable	t-value	t-table	Sig.	Conclusion
Service Quality	4.802	1.70	0.000	Significant positive effect
Customer Satisfaction	2.229	1.70	0.034	Significant positive effect

- For Service Quality, the calculated t-value is 4.802, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.70, with a significance value of 0.000. Since $t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$ and $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, meaning Service Quality has a significant positive effect on Customer Loyalty.
- For Customer Satisfaction, the t-value is 2.229, also greater than the t-table value of 1.70, with a significance of 0.034. This indicates that Customer Satisfaction has a significant positive effect on Customer Loyalty as well.

Simultaneous Test (F-test)

Table 3 shows the simultaneous test results using the F-test. The degrees of freedom are $df_1 = k = 2$ and $df_2 = n - k - 1 = 27$. The critical F-value at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 3.354.

Table 3. Simultaneous Test (F-test) Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	510.806	2	255.403	44.244	0.000
Residual	155.860	27	5.773		
Total	666.667	29			

The calculated F-value is 44.244, which is much greater than the critical F-value. The significance value is 0.000, less than 0.05, indicating that Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction together have a significant simultaneous effect on Customer Loyalty.

Coefficient of Determination Test (R^2)

Table 4 provides the R Square value, which is 0.766 or 76.6%. This means that 76.6% of the variance in Customer Loyalty can be explained by Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction together. The remaining 23.4% is influenced by other variables outside the scope of this study.

Table 4 Coefficient of Determination (R Square) Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.875	0.766	0.749	2.403

Discussion

Customer satisfaction has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul. The results of the partial test indicate that customer satisfaction is a key determinant in building long-term relationships between customers and the company. When customers feel satisfied with the service they receive—such as consistent water supply, responsive complaint handling, and accessible billing systems—they are more likely to remain loyal. This is aligned with the findings of Fornell, Mithas, and Morgeson III (2006), who emphasize that satisfied customers not only become repeat users but also contribute to the company's long-term profitability. Similarly, Effendi et al. (2024) and Winton et al. (2023) confirm that satisfaction acts as a strong mediator in converting service experiences into customer loyalty, particularly in public service institutions like PDAM.

This relationship also reflects the theory that satisfaction builds emotional bonds with the brand or service provider. Fatimah et al. (2022) and Darsono (2010) suggest that satisfaction increases customers' trust and reduces the likelihood of switching to competitors. Furthermore, Marifah, Jatmiko, and Andharini (2022) highlight that satisfied customers tend to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication, amplifying the reputation of the organization and influencing the decisions of potential customers. In the context of PDAM KCP Sei Agul, maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction is not only a matter of service excellence but also a strategic move to ensure sustainable customer loyalty in a competitive environment.

Service quality, on the other hand, also shows a significant partial influence on customer loyalty, supporting the idea that consistent and reliable service delivery is essential in public utilities. Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) argue that service quality is not only about meeting expectations but about exceeding them consistently to create loyalty behaviors. This is particularly important for utilities like PDAM, where service failures can directly impact customer well-being. According to Prasetyo et al. (2023) and Dewi and Mursyidah (2022), high-quality service—including clarity of information, speed of service, professionalism of staff, and ease of access—directly contributes to loyalty in local water service providers.

The positive relationship between service quality and loyalty is further echoed in the findings of Yuanitasari, Jualiati, and Praharjo (2022), who note that loyal customers are more tolerant of occasional service disruptions when they perceive the overall quality as high. Yanti, Anwar, and Bramana (2021) observed similar outcomes in PDAM Baturaja, where improvements in service quality led to greater customer retention. Additionally, Ramadhani Jatmika and Abdurrahman (2023) found that each dimension of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles—positively contributes to customer loyalty when mediated through satisfaction.

Several other studies reinforce the critical role of service quality in strengthening loyalty. Taufik et al. (2022) emphasize that quality service helps differentiate a company in competitive markets, which is crucial for PDAMs facing public scrutiny and growing consumer expectations. Ludji Koro (2014) and Rofiaty and Hidayatinnisa (2024) also found that service quality has both direct and indirect effects on loyalty through the development of trust and emotional commitment.

In the context of PDAM KCP Sei Agul, it is evident that delivering high-quality service is not just about meeting basic expectations but about building a service culture that fosters customer confidence and engagement. Ruslim et al. (2020) suggest that customers are more loyal when they perceive the service provider as consistent and attentive. The findings also support the idea

presented by Retna and Sulistiono (2014) that service quality improvements must be continuous, measurable, and customer-centered to maintain loyalty.

Moreover, the combined influence of customer satisfaction and service quality provides a holistic view of loyalty formation. The two variables do not operate in isolation; rather, they reinforce each other. High service quality enhances satisfaction, and in turn, satisfaction amplifies loyalty. This is supported by Pahlawan et al. (2019) in their study of PDAM Makassar, which found that service quality and satisfaction jointly influenced loyalty more than either factor individually.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that both service quality and customer satisfaction significantly and positively influence customer loyalty at PDAM KCP Sei Agul. High service quality leads to improved customer experiences, which in turn enhance satisfaction and encourage long-term loyalty. The findings support previous theories stating that satisfaction and service performance are key drivers of customer retention, particularly in public utility services where reliability, responsiveness, and trust are essential. Therefore, PDAM KCP Sei Agul must continuously maintain and improve its service quality to foster customer satisfaction and loyalty sustainably.

Future research could explore additional factors influencing customer loyalty, such as trust, service innovation, digital service accessibility, or environmental responsibility. Expanding the sample size and including multiple PDAM branches across different regions would provide a more comprehensive view. Further studies may also use a mixed-method approach by integrating qualitative interviews to understand deeper customer perceptions and loyalty motivations, allowing for more nuanced insights beyond quantitative analysis alone.

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