

User's Perception on Environmental Functions Provided by Municipal Services: a Case Study in Majlis Perbandaran Kulim (MPK)

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Abstract. This research is about users' perception of environmental functions provided by local government focused on Kedah Local authorities. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors affecting the users' perception of environmental functions provided by local government in Kedah. Instead of that, the study also aims at examining the relationship between environmental and municipal services providing by Majlis Perbandaran Kulim (MPK). The sampling of this research is about 100 respondents in Kulim Municipal Council. In this study, simple random sampling was used where only 100 respondents in local authority selected. This research used Descriptive Statistic and Pearson Correlation for data analysis purposes. Data were collected from citizens in October 2007 until January 2008. In this research three hypotheses were tested. The hypotheses which include cleanliness, collection and disposal wastes, drainage and sewage were not rejected. Findings indicated that all independent variables have significance with user's perception of environmental functions provided by local government in Kulim Municipal Council. In future research, a set of proper customer satisfaction should be formed to increases the level of satisfaction towards municipal services. By collaborating with government and participation by residents will improve the service delivery and positive perception by residents.

Keywords: Local Government, Local Authorities, Environmental Functions, Cleanliness, Collection and Waste Management

1. Introduction

Local Authorities (LGAs) hold a large number of facilities that place demands on resources. They have a responsibility to use and maintain a wide range of property assets including classified and heritage buildings, single purpose facilities and state of the art multipurpose facilities. In addition, amalgamations may have

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caused many authorities to have surplus property assets that duplicate functions. Resources allocated to running and maintaining under-performing or superfluous facilities directly restrict the authority's ability to provide the community with better services. However, communities often perceive closures as a reduction in service and resist the closing of facilities. Perhaps driven by a distrust of economic rationalism, communities often doubt the motives of managers who wish to close or combine facilities. The Malaysian administrative system is divided into three major levels of hierarchy: the Federal Government, State Government and Local Government, the latter being the local authority for its area. In 1976, the Local Government Act 1976 (Act 171) was promulgated providing a consolidated framework for local authorities. The enlargement of urban areas also means an increase in the problems, needs and complexities relating to urban governance. It has created a new set of challenges that entail an enhancement in the capacity and capability of the Malaysian local authorities. Councils often have difficulties communicating the reasons for decisions about facility closures to the community with accountability. Thus, this research try to reveal the user's perception in demanding new approaches, strategies as well as practical and effective answers and solutions for environmental functions provided by local government in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

In spite of what have been written, local authorities in Malaysia have been given wide powers within the Local Government Act of 1976. The functions not only include mandatory functions but discretionary functions as well. The mandatory functions include all critical functions such as refuse collection, street lighting and activities pertaining to public health. Discretionary functions include all development functions such as providing amenities, recreational parks, housing and commercial activities (Phang Siew Nooi, 1997).

2.1. Cleanliness

Additionally, Greenhalgh and Worpole (1996) in a study prepared for the UK Department of the Environment examined 12 main case studies and 26 supplementary case studies of good practice in urban parks across ten major areas: planning; managing; competing; delegating; maintaining; building; monitoring; involving; funding; and moving on. Both these studies were conducted within the context of declining quality in maintenance and development of urban parks and open spaces, also encompassing increased vandalism, lack of cleanliness, and fears for public safety. Swan (1995) conducted mail questionnaires with responses from 108 local authorities to examine the controversial role played by CCT in these developments. This analysis was subsequently followed up by Clark (1997). On top of this, the role of the tendering process within the wider leisure industry has also been the subject of a number of international case studies collated by Sayers (1997).

2.2. Collection and Disposal Wastes

In 1993, the Government of Malaysia initiated the privatization of urban solid waste disposal. That concept called for a feasible privatization plan for solid waste management, including storage, collection, transportation, processing and disposal of solid wastes. The stated objective was to provide an integrated, well-planned, well-managed, efficient and effective, technologically advanced solid waste management system in order to enhance the quality of the environment as part of Vision 2020. The thrust of the system is on waste reduction and the use of technology to recover resources from waste (recycling, composting, incineration etc.), thereby minimizing the need for final disposal, which is expected to become burdensome in the future. In fact, before the privatization exercise, some local authorities had already been contracting the waste collection service to a number of contractors. In other instances, the local authorities managed solid wastes by using their own staff and resources (MHLG, 2007).

In the case of Kuala Lumpur, City Hall has privatized the solid waste management for most of its area to Alam Flora Sdn Bhd. The privatization exercise includes taking on those staff and workers in the Urban Services Department of City Hall who opt to join the company, movable and immovable properties or assets, as well as contractors previously employed by the city authority for waste collection. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that while solid waste management is now under the responsibility of the private sector, it does not mean that the local authority can pass all its responsibility over to the company (Kuala Lumpur City Council, 2007).

3. Methods and Material

The researchers have chosen survey and cross-sectional surveys as the research design. Quantitative method will be used by researchers in the research design in order to have better understanding or to familiarize the user perception of environmental functions provided by local government. The population was among residents in Kulim Municipal Council in Kedah. Only 100 respondents were selected due to the cost and time constraint in data collection. In order to analyze the data, the statistical techniques used are Pearson Correlation and Descriptive Statistic.

4. Profile of Respondents

In this section, the researchers discuss about the respondents demographic such as gender, age, marital status, race, monthly salary and level of education. Majority of the respondents are female which representing 51. % (n=51). Meanwhile, males are the minority which representing 49.00% (n=19). Respondents are categorized into four age groups which range from less than 20 years old, 21-29 years old, 30-39 years old, 40-49 years old and more than 50 years old. From the table, majority of the respondents' age are 30-39 years old which representing 37.00% (n=37), followed by 29.00% (n=29) under group of 40-49 years old, 22.00% (n=22) under 21-29 years old, 7.00% (n=7) under group of more than 50 years old and 5.00% (n=5) under group of less than 20 years old. Majority of the respondents are married which representing 70.00% (n=70). Meanwhile 20.00% (n=20) of the respondents are widow or widower. Minority of the respondents are bachelor which representing 10.07% (n=10). Majority of the respondents are Malay which representing 80.00% (n=80), 10.00 % (n=10) representing Chinese respondents, 7.00% (n=7) representing Indian respondents and 3.00% (n=3) representing others. Majority of the respondents' education level are SPM which representing 45.00% (n=45), 40.00% (n=40) representing STPM/Diploma/A Level, 10.00% (n=10) representing Bachelor Degree, 3.00% (n=3) representing Master Degree, 1.00% (n=1) representing PhD. and 1.00% (n=1) representing Primary School.

5. Result of Findings

The Pearson Correlation obtained for the eight intervals scaled variables shown as indicated as follows:

Hypothesis 1:

- H1: There is a significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness.
- H0: There is no significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness

Table 1, there is a significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness where $p < 0.01$ ($p = 0.000$) and $r = 0.340$. Therefore the researcher does not reject H1 but the researcher rejects H0.

Table 1 Significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness

	Users Perception	Cleanliness
Pearson Correlation	1	0.340(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
N	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 2:

- H1: There is a significant difference among the users' perception on collection & disposal wastes.
- H0: There is no significant difference among the users' perception on collection & disposal wastes.

As indicated in the Table 2, there is a significant difference among the users' perception on collection & disposal wastes where $p < 0.01$ ($p = 0.000$) and $r = 0.300$. Therefore the researcher does not reject H1 but the researcher rejects H0.

Table 2 Significant difference among the users' perception on Collection & Disposal

	Users Perception	Collection & Disposal
Pearson Correlation	1	0.300(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
N	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

6. Comparison and Evaluation of Findings

All of hypotheses were not rejected by the researchers based on the findings. The findings has been evaluated by the researchers, and proposed the following conclusion and recommendations.

6.1. Hypothesis 1

- H1: There is a significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness.
- H0: There is no significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness

The hypotheses which is there is a significant difference among the users' perception on cleanliness, therefore it was not rejected by the researchers, where $p < 0.01$ ($p = 0.000$) and $r = 0.340$ and the significant level was $p < 0.01$ while the finding showed that $p = 0.000$. It means that cleanliness influenced users' perception on of Environmental functions provided by municipal council.

6.2. Hypothesis 2

- H1: There is a significant difference among the users' perception on collection & disposal wastes.
- H0: There is no significant difference among the users' perception on collection & disposal wastes.

The second hypotheses on the significant of different among the users' perception on collection and disposal was not rejected by the researchers due to the there is significant difference among the users' perception on collection and disposal wastes where $p < 0.01$ ($p = 0.000$) and $r = 0.300$. Thus, the hypothesis there is no significant difference among the users' perception on collection and disposal wastes was rejected by the researcher. The significant level were $p < 0.01$ while the finding showed that $p = 0.000$. It means that collection and disposal wastes influenced users' perception on of Environmental functions provided by municipal council.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations were made to the local government, local society, environmental services provided by local authorities and future research.

7.1. Local Government

Based on the findings, the researcher found that the environmental functions provided by local government such as cleanliness and collection of disposal waste programme are well provided by the local government. Among two environmental functions provided by local government, the highest frequency on user's perception on environmental functions provided by local government is on the cleanliness where 72.86% ($n=153$) of the respondents agree that local authority has provides cleanliness in environmental functions.

7.2. Environmental Services Provided by Local Authorities

Based on the findings, the researcher found that the most environmental functions provided by local government is cleanliness where 72.86% ($n=153$) of the respondents agree that local authority has provides cleanliness in environmental functions. The other four environmental functions provided by local government have less percentage rather than cleanliness. Environmental services provide by the local authorities should be upgrade for better services. Upgrading the environmental services is very crucial to

make sure that users are satisfied with the environmental functions provided by the local government. Functions provided by municipal council will be positive and more satisfied about it.

8. Conclusion

Based on the outcome of the research made by the researchers, the environmental functions provided by local government satisfied users because according to the findings, the users totally agree that local government provided enough environmental function at their living area. It means that local government has provided good environmental services for the users at their living area. The second objective is to identify the relationship between levels of environmental functions provided by local government with user's perception. Based on the findings, most of the users satisfied with the cleanliness environmental functions provided by the local government. Overall of the research made by the researcher, it can be said that all of the two objectives were answered in this research.

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