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The Effect of Price, Service, and Complaints on Satisfaction in Perumda Giri Tirta Gresik

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Abstract

Clean water is an essential public service, and customer satisfaction with water utilities depends not only on access but also on how fairly and reliably that service is delivered. In Indonesia, where regional enterprises like Perumda Giri Tirta are tasked with managing local water distribution, public trust can be challenged by rising tariffs, inconsistent service, and slow complaint resolution. This study investigates the influence of price, service quality, and complaint handling on customer satisfaction using a quantitative explanatory approach with 100 respondents in Gresik Regency. Multiple linear regression results show that all three variables significantly affect satisfaction, with price as the most influential factor. Service quality and complaint handling also play important roles, especially for younger, educated users who demand greater transparency and responsiveness. The model accounts for 82.4% of the variation in satisfaction, emphasizing the need for clear communication, dependable service, and efficient complaint systems. These findings offer practical insights for improving the performance and public perception of local water utilities.

Keywords: *customer satisfaction, public utility, water service, tariff, complaint handling, regional enterprise.*

Abstrak

Air bersih merupakan layanan publik yang sangat penting, dan kepuasan pelanggan terhadap layanan ini tidak hanya ditentukan oleh ketersediaannya, tetapi juga oleh keadilan tarif, kualitas pelayanan, dan respons dalam menangani keluhan. Di Indonesia, perusahaan daerah seperti Perumda Giri Tirta bertanggung jawab atas distribusi air di tingkat lokal, namun sering menghadapi tantangan dalam menjaga kepercayaan publik akibat kenaikan tarif, gangguan layanan, dan lambatnya penanganan keluhan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh harga, kualitas layanan, dan penanganan keluhan terhadap kepuasan pelanggan, dengan pendekatan kuantitatif dan 100 responden di Kabupaten Gresik. Hasil regresi linear berganda menunjukkan bahwa ketiga variabel tersebut berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kepuasan, dengan harga sebagai faktor paling dominan. Kualitas layanan dan penanganan keluhan juga penting, terutama bagi pelanggan muda dan berpendidikan yang memiliki ekspektasi tinggi terhadap transparansi dan respons layanan. Model ini menjelaskan 82,4% variasi kepuasan pelanggan, dan hasilnya memberikan rekomendasi praktis untuk memperbaiki kinerja dan citra pelayanan air bersih daerah.

Kata Kunci: *kepuasan pelanggan, layanan publik, air bersih, tarif, penanganan keluhan, Perumda.*

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INTRODUCTION

Clean water is a fundamental resource necessary for human survival and public health, making its availability and quality a critical concern for governments and service providers. In Indonesia, access to clean water is protected by Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution (Pasal 33 Undang-Undang Dasar 1945), which emphasizes that natural resources should be managed for the public good. To implement this, regional governments have established local enterprises such as the Perusahaan Umum Daerah (Perumda) to provide essential water services. One such enterprise is Perumda Giri Tirta in Gresik Regency, East Java, which aims to deliver reliable and accessible water services to the community.

Despite its importance, the delivery of clean water services in Gresik has faced increasing scrutiny. Many customers have expressed dissatisfaction due to sudden price increases, inconsistent water distribution, and poor complaint resolution. For instance, some users reported sharp tariff hikes without corresponding improvements in service, leading to questions about fairness and transparency. Other complaints included frequent supply disruptions and the perceived inadequacy of customer support responses. These issues point to a broader problem: declining customer satisfaction, which poses a threat to public trust and the long-term sustainability of the service (Hermawati, 2023; Rustanti & Alfianti, 2018).

Customer satisfaction plays a vital role in the sustainability of public services and reflects the effectiveness of service delivery mechanisms. High satisfaction levels correlate with citizen loyalty and willingness to cooperate with service policies (Ladhari, 2009; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Conversely, dissatisfaction can erode public trust and lead to reduced usage, complaints, and resistance to institutional changes (Asubonteng et al., 1996; Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Pricing is one of the most influential factors in determining customer satisfaction, especially in essential services such as water provision. Fair pricing reflects perceived value, and transparent price setting enhances customers' trust in service providers (Monroe, 1990; Varki & Colgate, 2001). Price increases that are not clearly communicated or justified may generate perceptions of inequity, which reduce customer satisfaction and increase complaint rates (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Zeithaml, 1988).

Service quality also significantly affects satisfaction. The SERVQUAL framework defines five key service quality dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—that shape customer experiences (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1990). Improvements in these dimensions have been positively linked to satisfaction across a wide range of public service contexts (Caruana, 2002; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Complaint handling represents another critical component in service performance. Customers who experience problems but receive effective and empathetic support tend to maintain higher levels of satisfaction than those whose complaints are ignored or inadequately resolved (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002b; Tax et al., 1998). Institutions that manage complaints transparently and efficiently are more likely to retain public confidence and reduce service disengagement (Hart et al., 1990; Johnston & Mehra, 2002).

This study seeks to investigate the influence of price, service quality, and complaint handling on customer satisfaction at Perumda Giri Tirta, Gresik Regency.

By examining these variables in an Indonesian regional utility context, the study contributes to a growing body of literature on public service management and provides actionable insights for improving essential service delivery at the local level.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative explanatory design to investigate how price, service quality, and complaint handling influence customer satisfaction at Perumda Giri Tirta, Randuagung Unit, in Gresik Regency. The explanatory approach was selected to examine causal relationships between variables using statistical tools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hair et al., 2019). The target population included 10,444 active customers, from which 100 respondents were selected using accidental sampling, a non-probability technique that draws participants based on availability and relevance (Etikan et al., 2016; Sugiyono, 2017). Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error determined the sample size, allowing a balance between accuracy and feasibility (Daniel, 2012; Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of statements rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Indicators for the price variable were drawn from consumer pricing literature (Monroe, 1990; Tambunan, 2016), while service quality followed the SERVQUAL model's five dimensions—reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1990). Complaint handling was measured through aspects like responsiveness, fairness, and ease of contact (Saputra et al., 2020; Tax et al., 1998). Satisfaction was evaluated based on perceived quality, emotional experience, and value (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017; Lupiyoadi, 2019). The instruments were pre-tested, and all constructs exceeded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The analysis employed SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics, while inferential analysis used multiple linear regression to assess the effect of each independent variable on customer satisfaction. Classical assumption tests—normality (Kolmogorov–Smirnov), multicollinearity (VIF), heteroscedasticity (Glejser test), and autocorrelation (Durbin–Watson)—were applied to validate the regression model (Ghozali, 2018). Hypothesis testing used both t-tests and F-tests with a 5% significance threshold, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) measured how well the model explained the variance in customer satisfaction (Pallant, 2020; Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Characteristics

Understanding the demographic profile of respondents provides important context for interpreting their service experiences and satisfaction levels. Factors such as gender, age, and education often shape expectations, responsiveness to pricing, and engagement with service complaints. The following charts summarize key demographic attributes of the 100 respondents in this study.

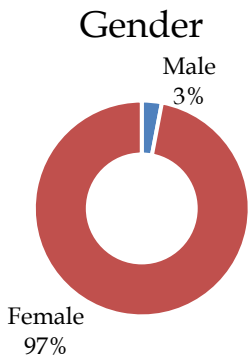

Figure 1. Proportion of Respondents by Gender (n=100)

Out of 100 respondents, 97% were female, while only 3% were male. This strong female majority suggests that women in the surveyed households are predominantly responsible for managing household water use and engaging with utility-related matters, such as billing, maintenance, or complaint resolution.

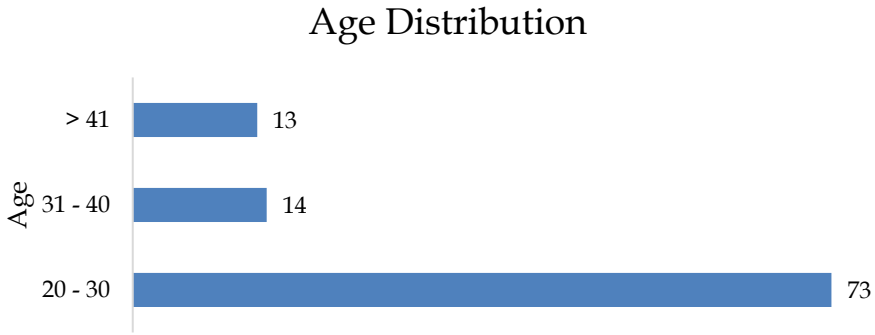

Figure 2. Age Distribution (n=100)

Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) were between 20 and 30 years old, indicating that young adults form the primary user base of the water utility. Respondents aged 31 to 40 years made up 14%, while those above 41 years comprised 13%. This age structure points to a relatively young and active customer base, likely more engaged with digital and responsive service features.

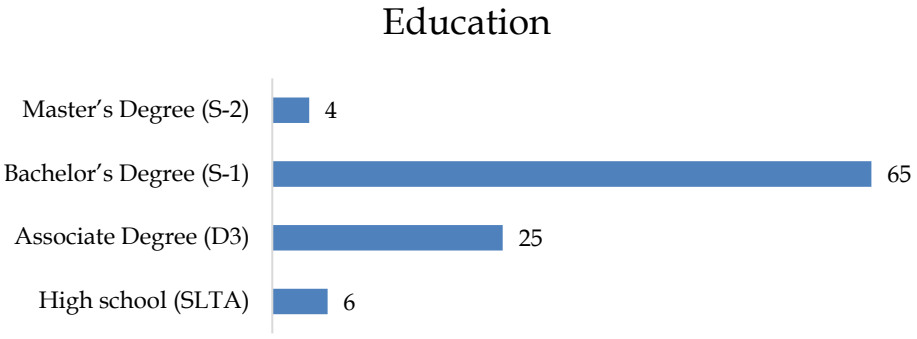

Figure 3. Respondent's Education (n=100)

In terms of education, 65% of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (S-1), followed by 25% with an Associate degree (D3). Only 6% had a high school diploma, and 4% held a Master's degree (S-2). This educational profile reflects a well-informed

consumer group that may have higher expectations for service quality, pricing transparency, and effective complaint handling.

Preliminary Tests

To ensure the integrity of the regression analysis, both the quality of the research instrument and the fulfillment of classical regression assumptions were tested. Table 1 displays the summary of the tests.

Table 1. Summary of Instrument and Classical Assumption Tests

Test	Result / Value	Conclusion
Validity (Pearson r)	r > 0.3, Sig. < 0.05	All items valid
Reliability (Cronbach's α)	α > 0.70 for all variables	All constructs reliable
Normality (K-S test)	Sig. = 0.187	Residuals normally distributed
Multicollinearity (VIF)	VIF < 10	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity (Glejser)	Sig. > 0.05	No heteroscedasticity
Autocorrelation (DW stat.)	DW = 2.130	No autocorrelation

The instrument's validity was assessed using Pearson correlation, and all item–total correlation values exceeded 0.3 with significance levels below 0.05, confirming strong item validity. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with all constructs surpassing the 0.70 threshold, indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The classical assumption tests were conducted prior to regression analysis. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test confirmed normal distribution of residuals (Sig. = 0.187 > 0.05). Multicollinearity was not present, as all VIF values were below 10 and tolerance values above 0.10. Heteroscedasticity was tested using the Glejser method, showing significance values above 0.05, indicating homoscedastic residuals. Additionally, the Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.130, which falls within the acceptable range (1.5–2.5), confirming no autocorrelation among residuals.

These results affirm that the dataset is suitable for multiple linear regression analysis, meeting all standard assumptions.

Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Following confirmation that the data met the required statistical assumptions, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of price, service quality, and complaint handling on customer satisfaction. The regression model produced the following equation:

$$Y = -1.270 + 0.428X_1 + 0.158X_2 + 0.323X_3$$

Where:

Y = Customer Satisfaction

X_1 = Price

X_2 = Service Quality

X_3 = Complaint Handling

The regression results are presented in Table 2 below. All three independent variables exhibited a positive and statistically significant effect on customer

satisfaction at the 5% significance level. Among them, price had the strongest influence (B = 0.428, p < 0.001), suggesting that perceived fairness and affordability are key drivers of satisfaction. Complaint handling also showed a significant contribution (B = 0.323, p = 0.038), followed by service quality (B = 0.158, p = 0.035), highlighting the importance of responsive and consistent service delivery.

Table 2. Summary of Multiple Regression Results

Variable	B Coeff. (Unstandardized)	t-value	P-value Interpretation
Constant	–1.270	—	— Intercept value
Price (X_1)	0.428	4.929	0.000 Significant positive effect
Service Quality (X_2)	0.158	2.135	0.035 Significant positive effect
Complaint Handling (X_3)	0.323	2.109	0.038 Significant positive effect

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.824, indicating that 82.4% of the variance in customer satisfaction could be explained by the three predictors. The F-test result (F = 149.404, Sig. = 0.000) confirms that the model is statistically significant as a whole, meaning the variables jointly have a strong explanatory power for customer satisfaction.

Table 3. Model Fit and Simultaneous Significance (F-test)

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.
0.907	0.824	0.817	149.404	0.000

These findings confirm that all three predictors—price, service quality, and complaint handling—contribute significantly to customer satisfaction, both individually and collectively. Price emerged as the most dominant factor in this context.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that price, service quality, and complaint handling significantly influence customer satisfaction with Perumda Giri Tirta in Gresik Regency. Among these, price emerged as the most dominant factor. This is consistent with previous findings suggesting that perceived fairness and affordability of service charges are primary predictors of satisfaction in public utilities (Monroe, 1990; Varki & Colgate, 2001). Consumers tend to assess price not just based on nominal cost, but also on perceived value and service quality (Jiang & Rosenbloom, 2005; Zeithaml, 1988).

The demographic profile of respondents strengthens the interpretation of these findings. The high proportion of female respondents (97%) suggests that women play a central role in managing household water services. Previous studies have shown that female users often exhibit higher sensitivity to service interruptions, pricing, and complaint responsiveness, especially in domestic utilities (Hadipuro, 2010; Leahy & Winter, 2011). Additionally, the majority of respondents were in the 20–30 age group and held a bachelor's degree, indicating a relatively young and educated consumer base. Younger, well-educated users are more likely to compare service standards,

scrutinize billing structures, and expect accessible communication channels (Al-Msallam, 2016; Nikhashemi et al., 2021).

The positive and significant effect of service quality aligns with the SERVQUAL model, which emphasizes reliability, responsiveness, and empathy as critical to satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1990). The regression findings, supported by the relatively high education level of respondents, suggest that consumers are likely to have well-formed expectations about timely service delivery and courteous interactions with staff. Prior research has demonstrated that consumers with greater awareness of service rights tend to evaluate service failures more critically (Bougie et al., 2003; Ladhari, 2009).

Complaint handling also showed a statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction, reinforcing earlier studies that highlight the role of effective grievance redressal systems in building trust and user retention (Johnston & Mehra, 2002; Tax et al., 1998). In the context of utility services, complaint resolution is not just a reactive function but a proactive mechanism for relationship management. Customers who experience delays or receive inadequate responses may perceive the provider as indifferent or disorganized, diminishing satisfaction (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002a; Voorhees et al., 2006). In this study, the modest yet meaningful influence of complaint handling likely reflects both the growing expectations of young, literate users and lingering dissatisfaction with past response patterns.

The high R^2 value of 0.824 suggests that these three variables—price, service quality, and complaint handling—collectively provide a robust explanation of customer satisfaction. This aligns with integrated service satisfaction frameworks that combine transactional factors (e.g., pricing) and relational aspects (e.g., responsiveness and complaint resolution) to explain consumer behavior (Chen & Chen, 2014; Oliver, 1999). It also implies that improvements in even one domain can yield meaningful gains in satisfaction, particularly in a demographic like Gresik's that is young, educated, and service-aware.

In summary, the results affirm the interconnected role of pricing, perceived service quality, and institutional responsiveness in shaping satisfaction with public utilities. The gender dominance, youthful profile, and educational background of respondents further contextualize these findings by pointing to a critical and quality-conscious customer base. For Perumda Giri Tirta and similar providers, the implications are clear: transparent pricing strategies, consistent service delivery, and efficient complaint mechanisms must be central to customer engagement strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study is an example of how fairness and transparency, especially in tariff setting, can shape public trust and satisfaction in essential services. When people feel that what they pay reflects the quality and reliability of what they receive, their sense of value strengthens. In the case of Perumda Giri Tirta, the strongest driver of customer satisfaction was price, not just as a number on the bill, but as a reflection of fairness, consistency, and communication.

At the same time, the importance of service quality and complaint handling should not be underestimated. Customers respond positively to service that is dependable and to institutions that listen. In this study, most respondents were young, educated women—an audience likely to be more critical, informed, and vocal when

services fall short. This makes their feedback particularly important for shaping future improvements.

Taken together, the results offer a clear message: satisfaction is not built on pricing alone, but on the sense that the service provider is fair, responsive, and invested in its relationship with the public. For local utilities and public service institutions, maintaining that relationship means going beyond technical delivery—it means communicating with honesty, responding with care, and making decisions that people can understand and trust.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several practical steps are recommended to improve customer satisfaction and service performance at Perumda Giri Tirta and comparable regional utility providers:

1. Prioritize Transparent and Justifiable Tariff Policies
   Since price was identified as the most influential factor affecting satisfaction, it is essential that tariff adjustments be communicated clearly and backed by rational, understandable justifications. Engaging customers through public notices, socialization meetings, or digital platforms can reduce resistance and foster acceptance.
2. Maintain Consistency and Reliability in Service Delivery
   Regular water supply without unexpected disruptions is a key expectation, especially for a younger and more educated customer base. Investments in infrastructure maintenance, operational readiness, and real-time communication systems (e.g., SMS alerts or apps) can reinforce perceptions of professionalism and competence.
3. Strengthen the Complaint Handling System
   Customers value being heard. Implementing faster, more responsive complaint channels—such as hotlines, mobile apps, or dedicated customer officers—can significantly improve satisfaction. Ensure that complaint responses are logged, tracked, and followed up with clear resolutions and timelines.
4. Leverage Digital Communication Tools
   Given the demographic dominance of tech-literate, younger adults in this study, digital platforms (WhatsApp, email support, service dashboards) should be utilized to streamline billing, service alerts, feedback collection, and complaint response. Automation and personalization features can enhance efficiency and customer engagement.
5. Develop Community Engagement Programs
   Programs that educate users on water usage, pricing logic, and service improvements can build a stronger relationship between the institution and the public. Listening sessions, user panels, and periodic surveys can provide valuable input while showing responsiveness and accountability.

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