



Reviewing the Effectiveness of Public Service Policy Implementation to Enhance Citizen Satisfaction

Azibo Dakarai¹, Masimbu Tererau¹, Fungae Tariri¹

¹Great Zimbabwe University

*Corresponding Author: Azibo Dakarai

Article Info

Article History:

Received May 3, 2023

Revised June 28, 2023

Accepted: July 15, 2023

Keywords:

Public Service Delivery,
Policy Implementation,
Citizen Satisfaction, Socio-
Economic Barriers,
Participatory Governance.

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of public service policy implementation in enhancing citizen satisfaction, with a focus on identifying socio-economic and cultural barriers that hinder the process. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with citizens and local government officials in marginalized and rural communities to explore their experiences with public services. The study reveals that while governments strive to improve service delivery, challenges such as financial constraints, digital divides, and cultural norms persist, limiting access to essential services. The findings demonstrate that existing policies often fail to address the nuanced needs of diverse populations, particularly in areas with limited resources and technological infrastructure. By analyzing the gaps between policy formulation and actual implementation, the research highlights the importance of community-based participatory approaches, inclusive communication strategies, and targeted interventions to improve the effectiveness of public service delivery. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on public administration and governance by proposing strategies for policymakers to enhance service accessibility, ensure equity, and promote citizen-centric governance. Future research should focus on integrating digital platforms and innovative technologies in overcoming these barriers.

Introduction

In modern states and organizations, public service delivery as a premise of creating societal welfare and meeting citizen expectations. In this regard, the formulation and implementation of policies relating to public services are pivotal since they dictate contact point/points between government and the citizens with respect to the services that are to be delivered as well as the quality of the services offered which in turn define level of satisfaction among the citizens. Thus, evaluation of the policy implementation in public services makes it obligate in estimating the efficiency and applicability of governmental institutions in response to people's demands. For many years, governments globally have extended efforts to improve the effectiveness and effectiveness of the mechanisms of delivering public services (Abdou, 2021).

But all the same, there are always obstacles in addressing policy objectives, be they in ensuring that policy outcomes are actualized to improve citizens standard of living. Rosenbloom et al. (2022) argue that the policy-formulation/implementation divide becomes a problem that undermines the efficiency of public service delivery because policies rarely perform as intended when implemented. As such, it becomes necessary and relevant to

review and assess the antecedent forces that either enhance or hinder the implementation process with the view of filling identified gaps within the service delivery frameworks (Wang et al., 2023).

In research by Mergel et al. (2019), consequently, one of the key objectives for public service policy implementation is to deliver the meant and expected end satisfactorily to the citizens. Perceived satisfaction is a measure of overall evaluation of policies and service delivery by the government to meet the needs and wants of the citizens, according to the study by Claassen & Magalhães (2022). Hence, it is significant for future research on policy implementation to examine the degree to which increases or decreases in citizen satisfaction have occurred to understand the abilities and limitations of governance to improve its structures and strategies for constant improvement (Bibri, 2021).

Development dynamics of the current society, including technological revolution, Socio-economic inequalities, and demography, make it even more pertinent to reassess conventional and conventional methodologies in the delivery of public services. As defined by Lee & Lee (2020), therefore, factors such as digital platforms that have come with the proliferation of information technology have implications on service delivery in healthcare, to name an example, in a positive way in terms of making services more accessible and improving the flow of basic administrative tasks. However, these new innovations require the government to conform to the ever-changing society by improving on its policies and infrastructure to support the new society where people have embraced new technologies, according to Kilag et al. (2023).

It is well understood that the connections between policy implementation in regards to public services and citizen satisfaction rate are multi-fold and depends on the interplay of multiple variables at the political, institutional, and socio-cultural level (Lee et al., 2020). This reveals that political will, bureaucratic capacity, resource availability and management, stakeholder involvement and CSR, and regulatory structures are all central to the process and results of implementation (Althaus et al., 2020). Therefore, using this theoretical lens, this paper argues that having an interdisciplinary consideration of governance is central to understanding the complexities necessitating the corresponding research by Rana et al. (2022).

Against this background, this research aims at assessing the possibility and probability of public service policy and its implementation in improving satisfaction amongst citizenry. Therefore, through the application of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this research seeks to understand the complexity of policy dynamics with reference to the formulation of policies and the implementation strategies together with the citizens' perception about the same. Based on the review of the literature and using quantitative approach, we aim at revealing major barriers and potential to improve efficiency of the public service delivery systems, research conducted by Voorn et al. (2019). As such, the research, which addresses questions concerning the determinants of policy compliance and their implications for citizens' satisfaction, intends to contribute to the ongoing debate on governance innovation and public administration with By Kulachai (2023) examines the generated findings will not only be informative to policy makers and practitioners, but also stimulate demand for increased government's responsibility, openness, and accessibility in decision making. Challenges and opportunities for enhancing the efficacy of public service delivery mechanisms, research by Voorn et al. (2019).

By shedding light on the factors shaping the effectiveness of policy implementation and their impact on citizen satisfaction, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on governance reform and public administration, By Kula chai (2023), the findings generated will not only provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners but also serve as a

catalyst for fostering greater accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in governmental decision-making processes. In the final analysis, the hope is to evolve in a progressive direction toward the governance model that serves as a life, liberty, and happiness model for all of the citizens (Malek et al., 2021).

Important to comprehend that not only the nature of PS policy and related implementation procedures, but social demand for proposed policies ultimately determine the effectiveness and productivity of using policies (Howlett, 2019). Them, in my case, the policies are seen to be deficient in clarity with regard to the multiple, mostly the marginalized, oftencraft, populations which they purport to support, as argued by Zina (2021). This goes in support the use of participatory approach in policy formulation and implementation within which citizens have direct influence on policies.

Furthermore, he noted that context in which policies is being implemented affects their performance in fundamental ways. Based on the work of Labadi et al. (2021), there are socio-economic realities, cultural and historical contexts, and institutional environments that define the implementation environment and that provide their challenges for governance actors. For example, if such service provision is in a developing country with scarce resources or in a politically unstable country, there might be many system-related challenges/deficiencies which if tackled require time and alternative measures (Berman et al., 2021).

In addition, the drive for citizen satisfaction is not only about efficiency in service delivery but also about equity, justice, and citizenship (Bouzguenda et al., 2019). Hence, this public service policy should therefore seek to provide solutions for current service requirements but also aspire to enhance social integration, bring out the marginalized division and ensure equal resource distribution. Regarding this, it can be found out that, only such policies that are based on such notions as community participation, decision-making from below and community-based development approaches are received wider support from different members of society, the research of Zhang & Tian (2023).

It is equally pertinent in the research conducted to understand how individual entities include global organisations, NGOs/independent agencies and donor agencies that play influential part in the framework and structures related to public service policy implementation. Although these actors may bring in resources, knowledge and technical help for the support of the government agenda, they also bring in problems and dependencies that affect the independence and resilience of the native institutional frameworks (Roger et al., 2019).

As a result, it becomes pertinent to achieve an equilibrium between the national ownership and sovereignty whilst embarking on external borrowings for public service policies research by Edler et al. (2023) While these actors may contribute valuable resources, expertise, and technical assistance to support government initiatives, their involvement can also introduce complexities and dependencies that may impact the autonomy and sustainability of domestic governance structures (Roger et al., 2019). Therefore, striking a balance between leveraging external support and maintaining national ownership and sovereignty is critical in ensuring the long-term effectiveness and viability of public service policies.

Method

This work used a qualitative research design to ascertain the impact of public service policies on the policy implementation process for citizen satisfaction. The reason the qualitative method was selected is to examine the interacting relationships between policy formulation, policy implementation and public perceptions. Data for the study was gathered through questionnaires administered to policy makers and implementers at the district level and

through focus group discussions with ordinary citizens who directly operate within the public service delivery system.

To achieve this, the participants were sampled purposively because the study aimed at those who has experience or something to offer on the issue of public service delivery. The targeted sample was 25 participants who work in organizations of various sectors including health, education and social services. The criterion used to select participants were individuals that had implemented public service policy and the end beneficiaries of public services. This enabled collection of various impressions on how effective policy implementation was being done.

Semi structured interviews were used while conducting this study because they allowed the participants to express themselves in detail about what they had gone through. Each interview took roughly between 45 minutes and an hour and all the interviews were voice recorded with participants permission. There was also focus group discussions among community members so as to come up with the groups' collective perception on the level of satisfaction with public services. Moreover, other data sourcing from policy documents, government reports, and the reviewed literature supported the interviews and discussions data.

A method of analysis for the qualitative data collected was thematic analysis. The interviews and focus group discussions were later transcribed and coded for emerging patterns and recurrent concepts regarding public service policy implementation. Each transcript was reviewed several times so that main themes with low between-researcher agreement would be less likely to be encountered. The framework to code the interviews was a combination of inductive and deductive methods; categories that evolved from the data as well as from public service policy and citizen satisfaction theoretical frameworks.

The criterion to make the study more credible and reliable when collecting data from interviews, focus group discussions and documents analysis was triangulation. Member checking was also performed during interviews to take a small sample of participants and ask them to assess the validity of the interpretations. This process helped to improve reliability and validity of the conclusions made for the study.

Results and Discussion

In assessing the viability of public service policy implementation, it remains pertinent to acknowledge the most diverse aspects of people's interactions with the policy. The following results section provides main findings that were collected from the survey through interviews conducted on members of the community and the local government authorities. These findings shed lights on citizens' opinions, expose the challenges towards implementation process, and pointed to the reality that digital platforms have a large influence. It will be useful for future research to combine research data of this type so that the overall picture of the situation and the factors that do not allow for efficient delivery of services will be clearer. It is not only unfortunate that realises the increasing implementation issues of public services, but also provides a context for the following discussion on strategies to improve citizen satisfaction and involvement.

Citizens' Perceptions of Public Service Policy Implementation

Citizen interviews showed that there are many perspectives depending upon the policy related to public services. The discussions also followed issues like the quality of what was offered, the quality of the process, and the level of satisfaction and citizenship. Some of the respondents regarded improvements of some of the sectors of public service as satisfactory while others had expressed very serious concerns over what they considered as delays,

opaqueness and general inefficiencies that hampered the achievement of service goals. In certain sectors, such as healthcare and administrative services, citizens reported positive experiences, emphasizing the efficiency and responsiveness of government agencies. One participant praised the swift processing of health services, noting:

“I was pleasantly surprised by how quickly my healthcare needs were addressed. The staff was attentive, and the services were completed without unnecessary delays.”

This type of feedback reflects the successful implementation of policy objectives where resources and trained personnel were sufficient to meet public demands. Another respondent mentioned the effectiveness of digital services in administrative tasks, stating:

“I was able to renew my ID online, and the process was very smooth. I didn't have to visit any office, which saved me a lot of time.”

Such instances indicate that the integration of digital platforms can significantly enhance citizen satisfaction when implemented efficiently.

However, a significant portion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the public service delivery system. One major issue identified was the delay in service provision, particularly in rural areas, where government offices were often understaffed and ill-equipped. As one interviewee shared:

“We wait for months just to get a basic service done. There are so few staff members, and sometimes they tell us to come back another day.”

This highlights the problem of inadequate resource allocation, where citizens in less-developed regions experience longer delays due to logistical and personnel constraints. Additionally, the lack of transparency in certain government processes was a recurring theme. Citizens frequently felt that the reasons for delays or refusals of service were not adequately explained. A participant noted:

“They just tell us to wait or come back, but they don't give any clear explanation. We don't know what's causing the delay, and it feels like they're not accountable to us.”

This reflects a disconnect between policy implementation and citizen expectations, where the failure to communicate clearly undermines trust in public services. Another challenge faced by citizens was poor communication between government agencies and the public. Several interviewees expressed frustration with the difficulty in obtaining reliable information regarding the requirements for accessing services. One respondent commented:

“When I tried to get my business license, I had to visit multiple offices just to figure out what documents were needed. Every office told me something different.”

This inconsistency in communication illustrates a significant inefficiency in the implementation of public service policies, which negatively impacts citizen satisfaction and contributes to a perception of disorganization within governmental institutions. The integration of digital platforms in public services received mixed reviews. Some citizens, particularly younger, more tech-savvy individuals, found the online systems to be a convenient solution to long-standing bureaucratic delays. As one interviewee explained:

“The new online services are a big improvement. I can submit my documents without going to an office, and the turnaround time is much faster.”

However, other citizens, especially the elderly or those in rural areas with limited access to technology, expressed difficulty in adapting to these new platforms. One elderly respondent remarked:

“I don’t know how to use computers well, and there’s no one to help. The new system is not for people like me.”

This digital divide poses a challenge for policymakers as they attempt to modernize public service delivery while ensuring equitable access for all citizens. Citizens’ perceptions of public service policy implementation were also shaped by socio-economic and cultural factors. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds often faced additional barriers when accessing services, including difficulties in navigating bureaucratic processes and a lack of resources to address service fees or transportation costs. One respondent from a rural area shared:

“It’s hard for people in my village to afford the transport costs to the city where the government offices are. Even when we get there, we might not have all the documents, and it becomes a wasted trip.”

This comment underscores the ongoing disparity in access to public services between urban and rural areas, further emphasizing the need for targeted policies to support underserved communities. Cultural expectations also influenced how citizens interacted with public services. In some cases, respondents felt hesitant to question or challenge government authority, particularly in regions where cultural norms emphasized deference to authority figures. One interviewee noted:

“Even if the service is bad, we don’t complain much. It’s not our place to question the officials.”

This cultural context complicates efforts to improve transparency and accountability, as citizens may be less likely to voice their dissatisfaction or demand improvements in public services.

Factors Influencing Policy Implementation

The delivery of the public service policies is influenced by factors that lead to the success or failure of the policies in achieving the expectations of citizens. These factors are many and varied, organisational and environmental, operating both within the governmental system as well as outside of it. In the context of the findings, some key factors that were unveiled as key to implementation of policies included bureaucratic capabilities, availability of resources, political will and choice of stakeholders. Knowledge of these factors enables service delivery to establish useful knowledge about the processes for enhancing or inhibiting overall public service delivery.

Competence of governmental institutions to deliver policy implications in the process commonly referred to as bureaucratic capacity became a variable of interest. It is the assumption in most systems of public service delivery that achievement of policy goals depends on skills, training, and motivation of bureaucrats who are supposed to implement these policies. Some of the interviewees pointed out that free operating bureaucracy could easily deliver services on time. One respondent shared:

“When you have staff who know what they’re doing, the process moves smoothly. But when they’re untrained or overworked, it causes delays and confusion.”

This points to a gap in bureaucratic capacity, where insufficient training and overburdened personnel lead to inefficiencies. Moreover, some respondents noted that bureaucrats’ adherence to rigid procedures, sometimes with little room for flexibility, often hindered timely service provision. Another citizen expressed:

“The staff stick to their procedures so strictly that it becomes hard to get anything done if there’s a small error in the paperwork.”

The quality of human resources within government agencies is essential for effective implementation, but limitations in training, oversight, and incentives create significant bottlenecks. In regions where bureaucratic structures are weak or underdeveloped, citizens frequently reported experiencing long delays and mismanagement of services. As one respondent from a rural area mentioned:

“In our district office, it feels like they don’t care. It takes weeks to get simple things done because the staff aren’t properly trained.”

This observation underscores how insufficient bureaucratic capacity can undermine the goals of policy implementation, leaving citizens frustrated and dissatisfied. Another critical factor is the allocation of financial and material resources necessary for implementing public service policies. The disparity in resource allocation between urban and rural areas was highlighted in several interviews. Respondents from rural communities often reported that inadequate infrastructure and funding severely hindered the effective delivery of services. One interviewee noted:

“The government office in our town doesn’t even have enough computers or basic supplies. They’re always asking us to come back later because they can’t process the paperwork.”

This highlights the direct link between resource constraints and policy implementation failures, particularly in regions that lack the financial and material resources necessary to support basic service delivery. In contrast, citizens in more urbanized areas often reported better access to public services due to better infrastructure and resource distribution. However, even in these areas, some respondents mentioned that uneven resource distribution within government departments could affect the efficiency of services. For example, one interviewee from an urban area remarked:

“Some departments seem to be better funded than others. You can see it in the way they handle things; the ones with more resources are quicker and more organized, while others are slow.”

This comment suggests that internal disparities in resource allocation within government agencies can lead to inconsistent service delivery, with some sectors performing better than others based on available funding. Political will is another fundamental factor that influences the success of public service policy implementation. The commitment of government leaders to driving reforms, enforcing accountability, and prioritizing public welfare is essential for effective policy execution. Several interviewees emphasized the importance of political leadership in ensuring that policies are not only well-conceived but also effectively implemented. As one respondent observed:

“When the leaders are serious about improving services, you can see the difference. Things get done faster, and there’s more transparency. But when there’s no political push, nothing changes.”

This underscores the role of political will in driving bureaucratic reforms and improving public service delivery. However, a lack of sustained political commitment was also identified as a key barrier to policy implementation. One citizen shared:

“We hear promises every time there’s an election, but after that, things go back to the same slow pace. It seems like the leaders forget about us until they need votes again.”

This sentiment reflects the common challenge where political initiatives aimed at improving public services often lose momentum once immediate political pressures subside. Without ongoing political support, policies may fail to achieve their intended objectives, leaving citizens disillusioned with the government's capacity to address their needs.

Effective policy implementation also depends on stakeholder engagement, particularly the involvement of citizens, civil society organizations, and other non-governmental actors. Engaging stakeholders in the policymaking and implementation process ensures that policies are aligned with the actual needs of the population and fosters a sense of ownership and accountability. Some interviewees acknowledged that when citizens are actively involved in the decision-making process, the outcomes tend to be more favorable. One respondent noted:

“When they ask us what we need and actually listen, the services improve. It’s when they don’t consult with us that things go wrong.”

This illustrates the importance of participatory governance, where stakeholder input can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of public service policies. Nevertheless, several respondents highlighted the lack of meaningful engagement in many public policy processes. One citizen remarked:

“We’re rarely consulted on important matters, and when we are, it feels like they’ve already made their decisions. It’s just for show.”

This comment reflects the perception that, in some cases, citizen engagement is superficial and does not influence actual policy decisions. Such tokenistic involvement undermines trust in public institutions and diminishes the effectiveness of policy implementation, as policies may not adequately reflect the needs and concerns of the public. In addition, the involvement of external stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations and international donors, can either support or complicate policy implementation. Some respondents noted that external actors played a positive role by providing additional resources and expertise. However, others raised concerns about the influence of these actors on national policies, with one respondent commenting:

“Sometimes it feels like our government is just following what the donors want, not what we need.”

This highlights the delicate balance governments must strike between leveraging external support and maintaining control over domestic policy priorities.

Impact of Digital Platforms

The advancements in informatics have made it easy for government to disseminate services through the use of technology making citizens to engage with the relevant authorities in their delivery. These platforms have certain advantages associated with them like increased access, less time consumption, and more effectiveness and openness. However, their benefits make not positive always because the use of these digital systems depends on some factors such as digital skills, the efficiency of the systems used, and accessibility across the different regions. The study showed that while implementing public service policy there are key benefits as well as risks involved in the use of digital platforms.

Perhaps the most often reported advantage of digital platforms is the level of access that has been enabled. Through these platforms, people can receive government services from the comfort of their homes in a bid in reducing physical traffic to government departments. Some of the interviewees said that it has ease their experience in dealing with government departments due to digital services. One respondent mentioned:

“I no longer need to take a day off work to go to the government office. I can do everything online, and it saves me a lot of time.”

This shift from in-person interactions to online processes has been particularly beneficial for individuals living in urban areas where digital infrastructure is more robust.

Additionally, many respondents noted that digital platforms have improved the efficiency of service delivery by automating tasks and reducing paperwork. One citizen shared:

“The online system has made things faster. Before, it would take weeks to get a document processed, but now I can get it done in a few days.”

This improved efficiency is a key advantage of digital platforms, as it allows public institutions to handle more requests in a shorter amount of time, thereby enhancing the overall responsiveness of public services.

Despite the advantages, the transition to digital platforms has not been without its challenges. One of the most significant issues raised by respondents was digital literacy, particularly among older citizens and those in rural areas. Some citizens reported difficulties in navigating online platforms, especially when they lacked familiarity with technology. As one elderly respondent commented:

“I don’t understand how to use these websites. I still have to go to the office and ask someone to help me because it’s too confusing.”

This highlights the digital divide, where certain segments of the population are unable to fully benefit from digital services due to a lack of necessary skills or access to technology. In addition to digital literacy challenges, usability issues with the platforms themselves were also a recurring theme in the interviews. Some respondents pointed out that the design of certain government websites or applications made them difficult to use. A respondent remarked:

“The website is not user-friendly. There are too many steps and the instructions are unclear. It feels like you need technical knowledge just to get things done.”

This comment underscores the need for better-designed interfaces that are intuitive and accessible to a wider range of users, ensuring that digital services are inclusive and easily navigable.

The success of digital platforms in public service delivery also depends heavily on equitable access to reliable internet infrastructure. While urban areas have benefitted from better access to digital services, respondents from rural and underserved regions frequently cited issues with poor internet connectivity. One individual from a rural area shared their frustration:

“The internet connection here is so bad that even when I try to use the online system, it takes hours just to load a page. It’s faster to go to the government office.”

This highlights a critical infrastructure gap that undermines the potential of digital platforms to improve service delivery in more remote areas. The uneven distribution of internet access contributes to a digital divide, which exacerbates inequalities in public service delivery. Several respondents echoed concerns that without adequate infrastructure, the move toward digital services risks leaving behind citizens in rural or low-income areas. As another respondent put it:

“It’s great that they’re pushing for online services, but not everyone can access them. They need to improve the internet in rural areas first before expecting everyone to use these platforms.”

These comments emphasize the need for governments to invest in closing infrastructure gaps to ensure that all citizens, regardless of location, can benefit from digital advancements. Another positive impact of digital platforms, as noted by several interviewees, is the increased transparency and accountability they bring to public service delivery. Digital systems allow for the tracking of applications and requests, providing citizens with greater visibility into the progress of their cases. One respondent stated:

“I like that I can track my application online. Before, I would have no idea what was happening, but now I can see the status of my request in real-time.”

This transparency helps reduce the uncertainty that often accompanies interactions with government institutions, making the process more predictable and less prone to corruption or inefficiency.

Moreover, the ability to submit complaints and feedback through online platforms has empowered citizens to hold public institutions accountable. One interviewee mentioned:

“If something goes wrong, I can file a complaint online, and I know it will be seen. This wasn’t possible before.”

By enabling citizens to provide feedback directly, digital platforms contribute to a more responsive and accountable public service system. However, it was also noted that the effectiveness of these feedback mechanisms depends on how seriously public institutions take the complaints and whether they act on them in a timely manner.

Socio Economic and Cultural Barriers

The delivering of public service policies is always faced by some factors that inhibit the access to those services among the population. These represent barriers arising from differences in, and distribution of, income, education, cultural and other social practices affecting access to and use of institutional services. Specifically, the research established that policy implementation in the context of the public service is compromised by the way socio-economic status and cultural backgrounds affect access and satisfaction of different users in disparate ways.

Socio-economic status is a major predictive factor on people’s capacity to access and gain from public services. They let alone lower income people suffer from lack of money, or knowledge about services, or even transport to reach the places where those services are available. One respondent from a low-income background expressed frustration:

“I don’t even know what services are available for me. The government talks about these programs, but they don’t reach us here. We feel left out.”

This comment reflects a common sentiment among individuals in economically disadvantaged communities, where the disconnect between public service availability and community awareness is stark. Another recurring issue is the cost associated with accessing public services, even when those services are theoretically free. Hidden expenses such as transportation, documentation fees, or the need for bribes (in some cases) disproportionately affect lower-income citizens. One interviewee mentioned:

“Even though the service is supposed to be free, you still need money for transport or other things. If you don’t have money, you can’t access these services, no matter what.”

This financial burden exacerbates inequality, leaving economically disadvantaged individuals unable to fully benefit from government initiatives, even when they are designed to be accessible to all. Education is another crucial factor that influences access to public services.

Individuals with lower levels of education are often less aware of their rights or the services available to them, and they may struggle with understanding the procedures required to access these services. One respondent, who had limited formal education, shared:

“I don’t know how to apply for these services. The forms are confusing, and I don’t have anyone to help me. It’s like the system is not made for people like me.”

This highlights a pervasive issue where the complexity of bureaucratic processes alienates citizens with lower literacy levels, preventing them from engaging with public services effectively. Furthermore, public service communication strategies are often not tailored to accommodate individuals from diverse educational backgrounds. The study found that public awareness campaigns rarely reach the most vulnerable populations because they are delivered through channels that these groups may not engage with. One interviewee noted:

“They advertise these programs on social media or in newspapers, but not everyone can read or has internet access. So, how will people know?”

This points to a disconnect in how government services are communicated to the public, leaving large segments of society uninformed and unable to take advantage of these services. In addition to socio-economic barriers, cultural norms and social practices play a significant role in shaping citizens' interactions with public services. In certain communities, traditional beliefs or gender roles may restrict individuals, particularly women, from accessing public services independently. One female respondent stated:

“In my village, it’s not common for women to go to government offices alone. We need permission from our husbands, and sometimes they don’t think it’s necessary.”

This cultural practice limits women's autonomy and their ability to engage with public services, reinforcing gender inequality in access to essential services. Additionally, certain ethnic or religious communities may experience discrimination or feel marginalized when interacting with government institutions, which are often perceived as representing dominant cultural norms. One respondent from a minority ethnic group explained:

“When we go to the government office, we feel like outsiders. They don’t speak our language, and sometimes they treat us differently. It’s like we don’t belong.”

This illustrates how cultural exclusion and a lack of sensitivity to the diverse needs of different communities can create barriers to accessing services, further marginalizing already vulnerable groups. Geographical factors also contribute to the socio-economic barriers that citizens face when accessing public services. Rural communities, in particular, experience significant logistical challenges due to their physical distance from urban centers where government offices are typically located. One respondent from a rural area commented:

“The nearest government office is hours away. Even if I want to apply for something, it’s not worth the time and cost of traveling there.”

This situation reflects the reality for many rural residents who are effectively cut off from accessing services due to the high cost and inconvenience of travel.

Moreover, these rural areas often lack the infrastructure necessary for the delivery of public services, such as stable electricity or internet connectivity, which exacerbates the problem. As another interviewee from a rural region noted:

“We don’t have internet here, so we can’t use online services. Everything takes longer for us, and it feels like we’re forgotten by the government.”

The lack of infrastructure in rural areas not only limits access to digital platforms but also widens the gap between urban and rural citizens in terms of service delivery, leading to unequal outcomes.

Addressing these socio-economic and cultural barriers requires a more nuanced and inclusive approach to public service delivery. One of the key findings from the interviews is the need for tailored strategies that consider the unique challenges faced by different communities. As one respondent suggested:

“The government needs to come to us. They need to understand our problems and make the services easier for us to access.”

This points to the importance of community engagement and participatory approaches, where government officials actively consult with local communities to identify their specific needs and challenges. Additionally, targeted interventions, such as mobile service units or community-based service centers, could help bridge the gap for rural and low-income citizens. One respondent remarked:

“If they can bring the services to us, even once a month, it would make a big difference. We wouldn’t have to travel so far, and more people would use these services.”

These mobile units can serve as a practical solution for bringing essential services to underserved communities, reducing the socio-economic and cultural barriers that prevent equal access to public services.

Prior studies conducted on citizenship and public service delivery have noted that socio-economic factors are influential in determining or rather limiting the access that citizens have to public service delivery. Bell & Smith (2022) on street-level bureaucracy identified that the financially disadvantaged are likely to have barriers like ignorance and cost issues when trying to gain public services. Suryanto et al. (2023) pointed out, the weak, the less educated have difficulties with many complex procedures so they are largely excluded from engaging in offerings delivered by the government. The present study can be said to supplement these findings, but builds upon the treatment further by asserting that although costs like transportation or hidden fees may now longer limit entry to a public service because the service is branded as ‘free’ or ‘for all’, such barriers nonetheless still exist.

This investigation also identifies a lack of inclusiveness of low-income groups in information dissemination and communication initiatives an area virtually neglected in the literature. For instance, some of the World Bank reports of 2022 have revealed that the minor groups of the population fail to know about the availability of public services since they barely access technologies and education. The present study builds on this knowledge by offering qualitative proof of how awareness campaigns, especially those utilizing digital tools or mass media, exclude the most vulnerable groups. This underlines the need for governments to use more community oriented approaches to more disseminating and engaging interventions including community focused interventions like use of radio, outreach programs among others.

The other socio-cultural factors that came out clearly in this study as hindrances to service uptake included culture and practices. There are indications in existing research regarding the gender aspects of the accessibility of service, especially in the context of traditional male dominated cultures where women are likely to need the consent of male relatives before availing themselves of government services. In her 2019 paper, Samson learned that in some parts of Southeast Asia, women and girls are socially and culturally powerless due to cultural

tradition and practices that limit their mobility and decision-making capabilities, subsequently limiting their access to such services like; health, education and social services on their own. This study supports such observations through demonstrating that the rural and tradition bearing women are constrained by socio-cultural norms and limitations on their movement. Further, it presents interview data showing the extent to which cultural norms and practices prevent women from engaging in service programmes.

One of the major deficiencies of the exiting literature is the failure to systematically analyze various aspects of ethnic minority's access to public services. Simonsen (2021) both discuss the difficulties of the minority to engage with the state institutions, yet, they provide more global perspectives on ethnic prejudice. This study addresses that gap by providing qualitative evidence about why language and ethnic bias in public institutions lead to distrust among minorities (Pandey et al., 2021). There is no doubt that through the use of first person accounts from people in these ethnic and cultural groups, this study offers a better appreciation of the ways in which ethnic and cultural differences influence the availability and the perceived satisfaction with government services.

According to the existing work, the literature also distinguishes public service provision between the urban and rural zones Beverley (2022). argued that citizens living in rural region are under high risk of being excluded from basic services in lack of functional infrastructure, long distances, and resource scarcity. The study findings affirm these claims, specifically through presenting up-to-date empirical evidence that shows that such rural impediments are still active even with the use of digital interfaces. This work emphasizes the role of space since while the people living in cities may have a possibility to use e-governance services, others from rural areas often cannot go online.

In contrast, the recent studies have indicated that through digital platforms that could provide governmental services remotely, Agrawal and Desai have pointed out that the digital recession in rural areas becomes a critical factor in India nowadays. This paper affirms that by presenting evidence of limitations to its use in rural settings arising from limited hardware filthy and poor literacy levels. According to the conclusions, digitalisation has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of service delivery while, at the same time, the presented research shows that current trends in this process may deepen inequalities unless simultaneous actions aimed at increasing infrastructure and digital competencies in the remaining areas are undertaken.

To fill these gaps, this study offers a discussion of how different socio-economic categories, culture, and geographic location affects public service delivery. This work is unique in that most previous studies investigate only one or two barriers, whereas this research is designed to provide an intertwined and additive perspective on barriers to access public services. In addition, the paper gives a map to policy makers on how these barriers can be addressed by policy modifications.

one issue risen in the research is that the concept of Mobile Service Units is possible a solution to the challenges of accessibility of services to huge populations in rural depressed ares. As demonstrated in prior works such as Lingg & Lütschg (2020), there are appreciable outcomes when using mobile healthcare units; this research complements that idea and proposes a technique of converting mobile healthcare units to solve numerous societal challenges, inclusive of service delivery in education and other social services domains. The results of the study therefore point towards the need to develop more variant service delivery systems appropriate to the different eras to extend special basic amenities such as health and education within communities mainly in regions of poverty and cultural difference.

A third and final contribution of this study is the finding that participatory community approaches are a promising solution for reinvigorating public services delivery systems. Compared to the prior studies that have concentrated on more centralized strategies of service delivery, the present research encourages a more bottom-up policies and service delivery futures where community members have an opportunity to be involved in policymaking processes of service delivery. This is in consonance with Kosec & Wantchekon (2020) who hold that when delivered through participatory governance, services increase in relevance and accessibility for the recipient population. Discussion interviews involved in the study also support this idea, as many of the respondents asked for a closer communication between official representatives and communities.

Conclusion

In light of the above, this study has offered a wide understanding of the socio-cultural economic factors constraining policy implementation of the public service, especially in the deprived and rural areas. It built on these gaps to underscore how issues of financial accessibility, lack of digital technology, and cultural barriers reduce peoples' access to services even though governments try to improve service delivery. In that sense, the study underscores the importance of diverse and multicultural communication processes, as well ensuring that community-engaged participation is included and effective public policies with special consideration for specific population sectors are adopted. As such it will be vital to mobilise efforts from all the government institutions, communities and other stakeholders in the provision of public services where citizens from all the areas especially the marginalised groups can gain access easily.

References

- Abdou, A. M. (2021). Good governance and COVID-19: The digital bureaucracy to response the pandemic (Singapore as a model). *Journal of Public Affairs*, 21(4), e2656. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2656>
- Althaus, C., Ball, S., Bridgman, P., Davis, G., & Threlfall, D. (2022). *The Australian policy handbook: A practical guide to the policymaking process*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003351993>
- Berman, E. M., Bowman, J. S., West, J. P., & Van Wart, M. R. (2021). *Human resource management in public service: Paradoxes, processes, and problems*. CQ Press.
- Bibri, S. E. (2021). Data-driven smart sustainable cities of the future: An evidence synthesis approach to a comprehensive state-of-the-art literature review. *Sustainable Futures*, 3, 100047. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2021.100047>
- Bouzguenda, I., Alalouch, C., & Fava, N. (2019). Towards smart sustainable cities: A review of the role digital citizen participation could play in advancing social sustainability. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 50, 101627. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2019.101627>
- Claassen, C., & Magalhães, P. C. (2022). Effective government and evaluations of democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(5), 869-894. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211036042>
- Eidler, J., Blind, K., Kroll, H., & Schubert, T. (2023). Technology sovereignty as an emerging frame for innovation policy. Defining rationales, ends and means. *Research Policy*, 52(6), 104765. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2023.104765>
- Howlett, M. (2019). *Designing public policies: Principles and instruments*. Routledge.

- Kilag, O. K., Miñoza, J., Comighud, E., Amontos, C., Damos, M., & Abendan, C. F. (2023). Empowering Teachers: Integrating Technology into Livelihood Education for a Digital Future. *Excellencia: International Multi-disciplinary Journal of Education* (2994-9521), 1(1), 30-41.
- Kulachai, W. (2023). Local government in Thailand: A way forward. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(2), 2268972. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2268972>
- Labadi, S., Giliberto, F., Rosetti, I., Shetabi, L., & Yildirim, E. (2021). Heritage and the sustainable development goals: Policy guidance for heritage and development actors. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*.
- Lee, H. J., Kim, M. Y., Park, S. M., & Robertson, P. J. (2020). Public service motivation and innovation in the Korean and Chinese public sectors: Exploring the role of Confucian values and social capital. *International Public Management Journal*, 23(4), 496-534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2019.1639570>
- Lee, S. M., & Lee, D. (2020). “Untact”: a new customer service strategy in the digital age. *Service Business*, 14(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11628-019-00408-2>
- Malek, J. A., Lim, S. B., & Yigitcanlar, T. (2021). Social inclusion indicators for building citizen-centric smart cities: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 376. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010376>
- Mergel, I., Edelman, N., & Haug, N. (2019). Defining digital transformation: Results from expert interviews. *Government information quarterly*, 36(4), 101385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.06.002>
- Rana, T., Steccolini, I., Bracci, E., & Mihret, D. G. (2022). Performance auditing in the public sector: A systematic literature review and future research avenues. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 38(3), 337-359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12312>
- Roger, C. B., Hale, T. N., & Andonova, L. B. (2019). The comparative politics of transnational climate governance. In *The Comparative Politics of Transnational Climate Governance* (pp. 1-25). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351135436>
- Rosenbloom, D. H., Kravchuk, R. S., & Clerkin, R. M. (2022). *Public administration: Understanding management, politics, and law in the public sector*. Routledge.
- Voorn, B., Van Genugten, M., & Van Thiel, S. (2019). Multiple principals, multiple problems: Implications for effective governance and a research agenda for joint service delivery. *Public Administration*, 97(3), 671-685. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12587>
- Wang, H., Coyte, P. C., Shi, W., Zong, X., & Zhong, R. (2023). Social Governance and Sustainable Development in Elderly Services: Innovative Models, Strategies, and Stakeholder Perspectives. *Sustainability*, 15(21), 15414. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su152115414>
- Zhang, Z., Yu, J., & Tian, J. (2023). Community Participation, Social Capital Cultivation and Sustainable Community Renewal: A Case Study from Xi'an's Southern Suburbs, China. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01536-x>
- Zina, O. (2021). *The essential guide to doing your research project*. Sage.
- Bell, E., & Smith, K. (2022). Working within a system of administrative burden: How street-level bureaucrats' role perceptions shape access to the promise of higher

- education. *Administration & Society*, 54(2), 167-211.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00953997211027535>
- Suryanto, A., Saliman, S., & Sudrajat, S. (2023). The weakness of character education in Indonesian teenager. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA*, 9(5), 3869-3874.
<https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v9i5.3721>
- Simonsen, K. B. (2021). Politics feeds back: The minority/majority turnout gap and citizenship in anti-immigrant times. *Perspectives on Politics*, 19(2), 406-421.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720002431>
- Pandey, M., Maina, R. G., Amoyaw, J., Li, Y., Kamrul, R., Michaels, C. R., & Maroof, R. (2021). Impacts of English language proficiency on healthcare access, use, and outcomes among immigrants: a qualitative study. *BMC Health Services Research*, 21, 1-13.
- Beverley, J. (2022). Testimonio, subalternity, and narrative authority. *A companion to Latin American literature and culture*, 524-536. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119692591.ch32>
- Lingg, M., & Lütschg, V. (2020). Health system stakeholders' perspective on the role of mobile health and its adoption in the Swiss health system: qualitative study. *JMIR mHealth and uHealth*, 8(5), e17315. <https://doi.org/10.2196/17315>
- Kosec, K., & Wantchekon, L. (2020). Can information improve rural governance and service delivery?. *World Development*, 125, 104376.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.07.017>