Journal Management & Economics Review
https://malaqbipublisher.com/index.php/JUMPER
Online ISSN 2988-3784

The Effect of Service Quality, Digital Governance Implementation, Employee Professionalism, and Public Participation on Citizen Satisfaction in Local Government Services

Original Article

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Received: 25 June 2026
Accepted: 27 July 2026
Published online: 29 August 2026

Abstract

This study examines the influence of service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation on citizen satisfaction in local government services. In the context of increasing demands for efficient, transparent, and citizen-centered public administration, understanding the determinants of satisfaction has become essential for improving governance outcomes. This research adopts a quantitative approach using a survey method, collecting data from citizens who have accessed local government services. A structured questionnaire was employed to measure perceptions across the four independent variables and their impact on citizen satisfaction as the dependent variable. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to determine both the individual and simultaneous effects of the variables. The findings reveal that service quality has the strongest and most significant effect on citizen satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible aspects of service delivery. Employee professionalism also demonstrates a significant positive influence, indicating that competence, ethical behavior, and accountability of public officials are critical in shaping positive citizen experiences. Furthermore, digital governance implementation contributes positively to citizen satisfaction by improving accessibility, efficiency, and transparency of services, although its impact is somewhat less dominant compared to human-centered factors. Public participation is also found to have a significant effect, highlighting the importance of involving citizens in decision-making processes and service evaluation to enhance trust and satisfaction. Simultaneously, all four variables significantly influence citizen satisfaction, suggesting that an integrated governance approach is necessary. The study concludes that local governments should not rely solely on technological advancements but must also strengthen human resource capacity and foster inclusive participation mechanisms. These findings provide practical implications for policymakers to design more responsive, transparent, and citizen-oriented public services, ultimately contributing to improved governance performance and public trust.

Keywords: Service Quality, Digital Governance, Employee Professionalism, Public Participation, Citizen Satisfaction, Local Government Services.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the transformation of public administration has increasingly emphasized the importance of delivering citizen-centered services as a core objective of local governments. Citizen satisfaction has become a critical indicator of governance performance, reflecting the extent to which public services meet community expectations and needs. Contemporary public administration literature highlights that citizen satisfaction is not merely an outcome of administrative efficiency but also a reflection of trust, transparency, and accountability within government institutions. The expectancy-disconfirmation theory explains that citizens evaluate public services by comparing perceived performance with their prior expectations, where satisfaction emerges when services meet or exceed those expectations (Zhang, 2021) . In this context, improving citizen satisfaction is essential for strengthening public trust and enhancing the legitimacy of local governments in delivering effective services.

One of the most significant determinants of citizen satisfaction is service quality. Service quality in the public sector refers to the ability of government institutions to provide reliable, responsive, and accessible services that meet citizens' needs. Recent studies emphasize that service quality directly influences citizens' perceptions and satisfaction levels, particularly in local government contexts where service delivery is most visible (Barros et al., 2025). Empirical evidence also suggests that dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangibility—commonly associated with the SERVQUAL model- play a vital role in shaping satisfaction outcomes (Budiman et al., 2026). However, despite increasing efforts to improve service quality, many local governments continue to face challenges related to bureaucratic inefficiency, delays, and inconsistencies in service delivery, which ultimately affect citizen satisfaction levels.

Alongside service quality, the implementation of digital governance has emerged as a strategic approach to modernizing public service delivery. Digital governance involves the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into government processes to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accessibility. In Indonesia and other developing countries, the adoption of e-government systems has become increasingly important in improving service delivery and citizen engagement. Research indicates that digital service quality significantly affects citizen satisfaction, particularly through system reliability, information quality, and responsiveness (Wulandari, 2025). Moreover, digital transformation initiatives contribute to building institutional trust and facilitating more efficient interactions between citizens and government agencies. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of digital governance implementation depends on factors such as technological infrastructure, digital literacy, and institutional readiness, which remain uneven across regions.

Another important factor influencing citizen satisfaction is employee professionalism. Professionalism among public servants encompasses competence, integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior in performing duties. Professional employees are more likely to deliver high-quality services, respond effectively to citizen needs, and maintain public trust. Recent studies on public service transformation highlight that employee competence and continuous professional development are crucial for achieving effective and efficient service delivery, especially in digitally enabled environments (Rulandari et al., 2025; Arif & Windarsari, 2026). In addition, professional behavior among government employees contributes to positive

service experiences, reduces administrative errors, and enhances citizens' perceptions of fairness and reliability in public services.

Furthermore, public participation has become an essential element in improving governance quality and citizen satisfaction. Public participation refers to the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, policy formulation, and service evaluation. Modern governance paradigms emphasize participatory approaches as a means of enhancing accountability and ensuring that public services align with community needs. Digital platforms have further facilitated citizen participation by enabling real-time feedback, communication, and engagement between citizens and government institutions. Empirical studies show that increased public participation positively influences governance outcomes and enhances citizen satisfaction by fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion in public service processes (Sadat, 2025). Additionally, participatory mechanisms contribute to better policy design and improved service delivery by incorporating diverse perspectives and feedback from the community.

Despite the growing body of literature on public service delivery, there remains a need to integrate multiple determinants of citizen satisfaction into a comprehensive framework. While previous studies have examined the individual effects of service quality, digital governance, employee professionalism, and public participation, limited research has simultaneously analyzed these variables within the context of local government services, particularly in developing countries. Moreover, the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the increasing demand for transparent and responsive governance highlight the importance of understanding how these factors interact to influence citizen satisfaction. Addressing this research gap is essential for providing a more holistic understanding of the determinants of citizen satisfaction and for informing policy strategies aimed at improving public service performance.

In addition, local governments face increasing pressure to adapt to changing citizen expectations in the digital era. The integration of digital technologies into public services has created new opportunities for improving efficiency and accessibility, but it has also introduced new challenges related to system usability, data security, and digital inclusion. Studies indicate that while digital governance can enhance service delivery, disparities in access and technological readiness may limit its effectiveness in certain regions (Frontiers, 2025). Therefore, it is crucial for local governments to adopt a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with human-centered service delivery, ensuring that all citizens can benefit from improved public services.

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that citizen satisfaction in local government services is influenced by a combination of factors, including service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation. These variables are interconnected and collectively contribute to the effectiveness of public service delivery. Understanding their relationships is essential for developing strategies that enhance citizen satisfaction and promote sustainable governance practices.

Research Objective

This study aims to examine the effect of service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation on citizen satisfaction in local government services. Specifically, the research seeks to analyze the direct and simultaneous influence of these variables on citizen satisfaction, providing empirical evidence

on how improvements in service delivery, digital transformation, professional competence, and participatory governance can enhance public perceptions and satisfaction levels. By developing an integrated model, this study contributes to the public administration literature and offers practical insights for policymakers and local government officials in designing more effective, responsive, and citizen-centered service systems.

2. Method

2.1. Research Method

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the effect of service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation on citizen satisfaction in local government services. A quantitative design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to test hypotheses and analyze relationships between variables using statistical techniques, providing objective and generalizable findings (Hair et al., 2022). The study employs a cross-sectional survey method, where data are collected from respondents at a single point in time to capture their perceptions of public service delivery.

2.2. Research Design and Data Collection

The research design is explanatory, aiming to explain the causal relationships between independent variables (service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation) and the dependent variable (citizen satisfaction). This study uses a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The relationships between variables are analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is suitable for complex models involving multiple constructs and indicators, particularly in exploratory and predictive research contexts (Sarstedt et al., 2022).

2.3. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of citizens who have accessed or utilized local government services within the last 12 months. These services may include administrative services (e.g., identity cards, permits), public complaint systems, or digital government platforms. The study focuses on citizens because they are the primary beneficiaries and evaluators of public services.

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, where respondents are selected based on specific criteria: (1) individuals aged 18 years or older, and (2) individuals who have experience interacting with local government services, either offline or online. This approach ensures that respondents have sufficient knowledge and experience to provide valid responses.

A minimum sample size of 200 respondents is targeted, following the recommendation for PLS-SEM analysis, which suggests that sample size should be at least 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at a particular construct (Hair et al., 2022). A larger sample size enhances the robustness and reliability of the statistical analysis.

2.4. Data Collection Method

Primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire distributed both online (via Google Forms or similar platforms) and offline to ensure broader accessibility. The questionnaire is designed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing respondents to express their level of agreement with each statement.

The questionnaire consists of two main sections. The first section captures respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, education level, and frequency of using public services. The second section measures the research variables using validated indicators adapted from previous studies to ensure content validity and reliability.

2.5. Measurement of Variables

All constructs in this study are measured reflectively using multiple indicators adapted from recent literature:

2.5.1. Service Quality (SQ)

Service quality is measured based on the SERVQUAL dimensions, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Indicators are adapted from recent public service studies (Prasetyo et al., 2023). Example items include "Public services are delivered accurately and reliably" and "Government staff respond promptly to citizen requests.

2.5.2. Digital Governance Implementation (DGI)

Digital governance is measured through indicators such as system quality, information quality, ease of use, and accessibility of digital services. These indicators reflect the effectiveness of e-government systems (Wirtz et al., 2021). Example items include "Online government services are easy to use" and "Digital platforms provide accurate and timely information".

2.5.3. Public Participation (PP)

Employee professionalism is assessed through competence, integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior. Indicators are adapted from recent public administration studies (Kim & Lee, 2022). Example items include "Government employees demonstrate professionalism in their work" and "Public officials provide services with integrity and fairness'.

2.5.4. Citizen Satisfaction (CS)

Citizen satisfaction is the dependent variable, measured through overall satisfaction, perceived service performance, and expectation fulfillment. Indicators are adapted from recent satisfaction models in public services (Van de Walle, 2021). Example items include "I am satisfied with the quality of local government services" and "Public services meet my expectations."

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis in this study uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of software such as SmartPLS. PLS-SEM is chosen because it is suitable for predictive analysis, does not require normal data distribution, and can handle complex models with multiple variables (Hair et al., 2022)

The analysis consists of two main stages:

2.6.1. Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement model is assessed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs:

- Convergent Validity: Assessed using factor loadings (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.50).
- Reliability: Measured using Composite Reliability (>0.70) and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70).
- Discriminant Validity: Evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings.

2.6.2. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model is assessed to test the research hypotheses:

- Path Coefficients (β) to determine the strength and direction of relationships.
- t-statistics and p-values obtained through bootstrapping to assess significance.
- Coefficient of Determination (R^2) to evaluate the explanatory power of the model.
- Effect Size (f^2) to measure the impact of each independent variable.
- Predictive Relevance (Q^2) to assess the model's predictive accuracy.

2.7. Research Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Service quality has a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction.
- H2: Digital governance implementation has a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction.
- H3: Employee professionalism has a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction.
- H4: Public participation has a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction.

2.8. Research Hypotheses

This study ensures that all ethical standards in research are maintained. Participation in the survey is voluntary, and respondents are informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents are strictly protected, and the data collected are used solely for academic purposes. Informed consent is obtained from all participants before completing the questionnaire

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on data collected from 200 respondents. The analysis is conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which includes descriptive statistics, measurement model evaluation (outer model), and structural model evaluation (inner model).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	55.0

	Female	90	45.0
Age	18–25 years	95	47.5
	26–35 years	70	35.0
	>35 years	35	17.5
Education Level	High School	65	32.5
	Bachelor Degree	105	52.5
	Postgraduate	30	15.0
Service Usage Experience	<1 year	60	30.0
	1–3 years	95	47.5
	>3 years	45	22.5

Source: Data Analysis

The majority of respondents are male (55.0%), with the largest age group being 18–25 years (47.5%). Most respondents hold a bachelor's degree (52.5%) and have moderate experience in using public services (1–3 years, 47.5%). This indicates that the sample is dominated by young, educated citizens who are relatively familiar with government services.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Service Quality (SQ)	4.02	0.68
Digital Governance (DGI)	3.95	0.72
Employee Professionalism (EP)	4.08	0.65
Public Participation (PP)	3.88	0.70
Citizen Satisfaction (CS)	4.05	0.66

Source: Data Analysis

All variables have mean values above 3.80, indicating that respondents generally perceive service quality, digital governance, employee professionalism, and citizen satisfaction as good. Public participation has the lowest mean (3.88), suggesting that citizen involvement in governance processes is relatively lower compared to other factors.

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Reliability

Variable	Indicator Loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
SQ	0.72–0.88	0.62	0.89	0.85
DGI	0.74–0.87	0.63	0.90	0.86
EP	0.75–0.89	0.65	0.91	0.88
PP	0.71–0.86	0.60	0.88	0.84
CS	0.76–0.90	0.66	0.92	0.89

Source: Data Analysis

All constructs meet the criteria for convergent validity, with factor loadings above 0.70 and AVE values exceeding 0.50. Additionally, composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.70, indicating that all constructs are reliable and internally consistent.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Variable	SQ	DGI	EP	PP	CS
SQ	0.79				
DGI	0.65	0.79			
EP	0.68	0.66	0.81		

PP	0.60	0.63	0.64	0.77	
CS	0.72	0.70	0.73	0.68	0.81

Source: Data Analysis

The square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs, confirming good discriminant validity. This indicates that each variable is distinct and measures a different concept.

Table 5. Structural Model Results (Hypothesis Testing)

Hypothesis	Relationship	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	SQ → CS	0.28	3.95	0.000	Supported
H2	DGI → CS	0.25	3.60	0.000	Supported
H3	EP → CS	0.30	4.20	0.000	Supported
H4	PP → CS	0.22	3.10	0.002	Supported

Source: Data Analysis

All hypotheses are supported, indicating that service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation have positive and significant effects on citizen satisfaction. Employee professionalism has the strongest influence (β = 0.30), followed by service quality (β = 0.28), digital governance (β = 0.25), and public participation (β = 0.22).

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R^2 Value
Citizen Satisfaction	0.68

Source: Data Analysis

The R^2 value of 0.68 indicates that 68% of the variance in citizen satisfaction can be explained by service quality, digital governance, employee professionalism, and public participation. This suggests that the model has strong explanatory power.

Table 7. Effect Size (f^2)

Relationship	f^2 Value	Effect Size
SQ → CS	0.12	Medium
DGI → CS	0.10	Small
EP → CS	0.15	Medium
PP → CS	0.08	Small

Source: Data Analysis

Employee professionalism and service quality have moderate effect sizes, indicating their substantial contribution to citizen satisfaction. Digital governance and public participation have smaller but still meaningful effects.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	Q^2 Value
Citizen Satisfaction	0.45

Source: Data Analysis

The Q^2 value of 0.45 indicates that the model has strong predictive relevance, meaning it is capable of accurately predicting citizen satisfaction based on the independent variables.

3.1. Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the determinants of citizen satisfaction in local government services, particularly in the context of service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation. Based on the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, all four independent variables were found to have a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction. These findings reinforce and extend existing literature in public administration by demonstrating that citizen satisfaction is a multidimensional construct influenced by both institutional performance and citizen engagement mechanisms.

First, the results confirm that service quality has a positive and significant impact on citizen satisfaction. This finding is consistent with prior studies that emphasize the central role of service delivery in shaping public perceptions of government performance (Prasetyo et al., 2023; Van de Walle, 2021). The SERVQUAL dimensions—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility—remain highly relevant in the public sector, particularly in local government services where citizens interact directly with service providers. In this study, the relatively strong effect of service quality ($\beta = 0.28$) suggests that citizens place high importance on timely, accurate, and responsive services. When public services are delivered efficiently and meet citizens' expectations, satisfaction increases significantly. This supports the expectancy-disconfirmation theory, which posits that satisfaction arises when perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations (Zhang, 2021). Therefore, improving service quality should remain a primary focus for local governments seeking to enhance citizen satisfaction.

Second, digital governance implementation also shows a significant positive effect on citizen satisfaction. This finding highlights the growing importance of digital transformation in public service delivery. The integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into government processes enables faster, more transparent, and more accessible services. The result ($\beta = 0.25$) indicates that citizens value the convenience and efficiency provided by digital platforms, such as online applications, e-services, and digital complaint systems. This is in line with recent studies suggesting that digital service quality significantly enhances user satisfaction and trust in government institutions (Wirtz et al., 2021; Rulandari et al., 2025). However, the effect size of digital governance is slightly lower than that of service quality and employee professionalism, which may suggest that technological improvements alone are not sufficient. Citizens still require human interaction, clarity, and support when using digital services. Thus, successful digital governance must be complemented by user-friendly design, digital literacy support, and reliable system performance.

Third, employee professionalism emerges as the most influential factor affecting citizen satisfaction ($\beta = 0.30$). This finding underscores the critical role of human resources in public service delivery. Professionalism, characterized by competence, integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior, directly shapes citizens' service experiences. When government employees demonstrate professionalism, citizens are more likely to perceive services as fair, trustworthy, and efficient. This result aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of public servant competence and ethical conduct in building citizen trust and satisfaction (Kim & Lee, 2022). In many cases, even when systems and procedures are well-designed, poor employee behavior can undermine service quality. Therefore, investing in employee training, capacity

building, and performance evaluation is essential for improving service outcomes. Furthermore, in the digital era, employee professionalism also includes the ability to adapt to new technologies and provide assistance to citizens navigating digital platforms.

Fourth, public participation is found to have a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction, although its impact is relatively smaller compared to other variables ($\beta = 0.22$). This finding suggests that while citizen involvement is important, it may not yet be fully optimized in the context of local government services. Public participation enhances satisfaction by giving citizens a voice in decision-making processes and allowing them to provide feedback on service delivery. This aligns with participatory governance theory, which emphasizes the role of citizen engagement in improving accountability and policy outcomes (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2023). The relatively lower effect size may indicate that participation mechanisms are still limited or not effectively utilized. For example, citizens may not be fully aware of available participation channels, or their feedback may not be adequately incorporated into policy decisions. Therefore, local governments should strengthen participatory platforms, including digital feedback systems, public consultations, and community forums, to ensure that citizen input is meaningfully integrated into governance processes.

In addition to examining individual effects, the overall model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with an R^2 value of 0.68. This indicates that 68% of the variance in citizen satisfaction can be explained by the four independent variables. This high level of explanatory power suggests that the model provides a comprehensive understanding of the key determinants of citizen satisfaction in local government services. Furthermore, the Q^2 value of 0.45 confirms that the model has strong predictive relevance, meaning it can effectively predict citizen satisfaction based on improvements in service quality, digital governance, employee professionalism, and public participation.

The findings of this study also have important theoretical implications. First, they support the integration of traditional public service quality frameworks with modern digital governance and participatory governance perspectives. While service quality remains a foundational determinant of satisfaction, digital transformation and citizen engagement introduce new dimensions that must be considered in contemporary public administration research. Second, the study highlights the continued importance of human factors, particularly employee professionalism, in an increasingly digitalized environment. This suggests that technological advancements should not replace human interaction but rather complement it.

From a practical perspective, the results provide valuable guidance for policymakers and local government officials. To enhance citizen satisfaction, local governments should adopt a holistic approach that simultaneously improves service quality, strengthens digital governance, enhances employee professionalism, and promotes public participation. Specifically, efforts should be directed toward improving service responsiveness, reducing bureaucratic delays, and ensuring consistency in service delivery. In terms of digital governance, investments in infrastructure, system reliability, and user-friendly interfaces are essential. Additionally, training programs should be implemented to enhance employees' technical and interpersonal skills, ensuring that they can effectively support citizens in both offline and online service environments.

Moreover, local governments should actively encourage citizen participation by providing accessible and transparent platforms for feedback and engagement. This includes

leveraging digital technologies to facilitate real-time communication and incorporating citizen input into decision-making processes. By doing so, governments can foster a sense of ownership and trust among citizens, which ultimately contributes to higher satisfaction levels.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to examine how changes in service quality, digital governance, and participation affect satisfaction over time. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Future studies could incorporate objective performance indicators to complement survey data. Finally, the research is limited to a specific local government context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Further research in different regions and countries would provide a more comprehensive understanding of these relationships.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that citizen satisfaction in local government services is significantly shaped by a combination of institutional, technological, and social factors, particularly service quality, digital governance implementation, employee professionalism, and public participation. The findings demonstrate that among these variables, service quality and employee professionalism remain the most influential determinants, highlighting the continued importance of human-centered public service delivery even in an increasingly digital administrative environment. At the same time, the implementation of digital governance plays a critical supporting role by enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of services, thereby indirectly strengthening public trust and satisfaction. Public participation also emerges as a meaningful contributor, reinforcing the idea that inclusive governance and citizen engagement foster a sense of ownership and responsiveness in public service provision. Collectively, these results suggest that improving citizen satisfaction requires an integrated approach in which local governments not only invest in digital transformation but also prioritize capacity building among public employees and actively create participatory channels for citizens. Thus, sustainable improvements in public service outcomes depend on the alignment of administrative professionalism, technological innovation, and democratic engagement within local governance systems.

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