



## Public Service Transformation : Improving the Service Quality of Regional Public Companies

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### ABSTRACT

This research was conducted because there was a decrease in the number of customers of the Tirta Giri Nata Drinking Water Regional Public Company in Cirebon City during the 2021-2023 period. This research uses a qualitative method by collecting data through interviews, observation and documentation. This research uses public service theory which focuses on the five main service quality dimensions related to customer service by public water companies: Tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. This study uses an interactive model data analysis procedure, which begins with data collection and continues with data reduction, data visualization, and conclusion drawing as the final step. The results showed that the service quality of PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City still did not meet the five main success indicators, namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible. The conclusion of this study is that the quality of customer service at PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City, especially in terms of administrative and technical complaint services, has not yet reached an optimal level. There are still shortcomings in fulfilling the expected dimensions and indicators of service quality.

**Keywords:** Public Service, Service Quality, and Customer Satisfaction

## INTRODUCTION

Service quality is achieving a level of excellence in meeting customer expectations. Tirta Giri Nata Regional Drinking Water Company (PERUMDA) is a regional company that provides clean water which is supervised and monitored by the executive and legislative branches. PERUMDA as a regional company is given the responsibility to develop and manage a customer service system at affordable prices. The Tirta Giri Nata Regional Drinking Water Company, Cirebon City, in providing quality services pays attention to five indicators, including: Guarantee that is, it includes the employee's ability, courtesy and expertise without risk or suspicion. Concrete evidence, Empathy, namely the ability to communicate effectively and understand customer needs, Reliability and Responsiveness, namely the ability of employees to help customers and provide fast service. Customer satisfaction is a person's happiness or disappointment when comparing expectations with the observed performance or results of a product. (Jems Yerison Kanaf, Ira Irawati, 2022)

Based on the website [tirtagirinatacrb.co.id](http://tirtagirinatacrb.co.id) PERUMDA (Regional Public Company) provides various services to the community, including new connections, water tanks, complaints, and reopening of services. For those who need a new water connection, prospective customers can apply by filling out the application form and attaching the required documents. PERUMDA then carried out an inspection and installed a new water connection to the property in question. Apart from that, to meet additional water storage needs, PERUMDA also provides water tank services. Customers who experience problems such as poor water quality or service interruptions can submit complaints through various communication channels provided by PERUMDA, such as the telephone service center, mobile application, or official website. Finally, for customers who have experienced service termination, they can apply to reopen service after fulfilling the requirements determined by PERUMDA, such as paying off arrears. PERUMDA aims to provide drinking water services to the entire community in a fair, equitable and sustainable manner by adhering to service standards and Building Construction Permit (IMB) requirements as well as strengthening corporate governance (PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Drinking Water, 2024).

In daily operations, PERUMDA may face a number of problems that can affect the quality of the services they provide to customers. One problem that often occurs is delays in handling customer complaints. Customers may have difficulty reporting problems or complaints, and when they do, the handling is too slow or unsatisfactory. This can create customer dissatisfaction and reduce their trust in the service provider. Apart from that, PERUMDA also often faces problems related to poor water quality. Customers often experience smelly or cloudy water, which indicates problems in providing clean water by PERUMDA. Poor water quality can disrupt the health and comfort of customers, as well as reduce confidence in the services provided. Other problems include unfriendly service from PERUMDA employees, difficulty in getting the information needed by customers, and unscheduled water outages without prior notification. All of these problems require serious attention and handling from PERUMDA in order to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.

Therefore, further research is deemed necessary, especially in PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata, Cirebon City. The public's complaint is about water meters. In this case, the water flow is directed according to the amount of water distributed to the community, based on the quality of the water and the volume of water distributed. This can affect the quality of services provided to the community. The results of initial research on the performance of Human Resources at PERUMDA show that the factors involved in serving customers have not been identified optimally, so that service quality has not reached its maximum.

Based on this background, by referring to public service theory, researchers are interested in knowing service quality in increasing customer satisfaction?

### **Literature Review**

Research conducted by Putri Kusuma Dayanti, Ni Putu Anik Prabawati and Ni Wayan Supriyanti (2023) entitled "The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction at the Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Tirta Sewakadarma, Denpasar City". This research uses Service Quality theory. The results of this research show that all hypotheses are accepted. There is a difference between this research and the research we conducted, namely in the research method used (Quantitative) and also the different case studies. (Putri Kusuma Dayanti, Ni Putu Anik Prabawati, 2023)

Second, research conducted by Sintia Bela Aprilia, Nurul Umi Ati and Retno Wulan Sekarsari (2020) entitled "Analysis of the Service Quality of Regional Drinking Water Companies (PDAM) Dampit District in Responding to Community Complaints to Increase Customer Satisfaction (Study in Pamotan Village, Ubalan, Dawuhan, Dampit District, Malang Regency)". Researchers apply Service Quality theory in this study, which uses descriptive methodology and qualitative data analysis. Data collection techniques used include interviews, observation and documentation. The results of the research carried out all show that the quality of service provided is quite good in terms of facilities and infrastructure, fast and polite service when responding to customer complaints. However, the service is still felt to be lacking regarding the continuity of water provided to customers, where the water flows at certain hours and there are times when the flowing water smells like medicine (Aprilia et al., 2020).

Third, research entitled "Quality of Public Services of Regional Drinking Water Companies: Case Study in Regional Drinking Water Companies Region II Makassar City". This research uses quantitative methods using Public Service Quality theory. The problem of this research is that the quality of service that is still not satisfactory to the public is very dilemmatic. Meanwhile, rapid population growth has resulted in a reduction in the potential for water supply, while on the other hand, water demand is increasing. Thus, this research should provide quality PDAM Makassar City services to its customers in realizing a professional and reliable service system (Santosa, 2020).

Public services provided to the community can be divided into two large groups. First, services aimed at the general needs of society, such as providing transportation facilities, health facilities, building educational institutions, maintaining security, etc. Second, services provided individually to each person, such as issuing Resident Identity Cards (KTP) and various other administrative letters. (Sumaryadi, 2010) in (Han & Goleman, Daniel; Boyatzis, Richard; Mckee, 2019).

All types of services, whether in the form of public goods or public services, are called public services. In general, State-Owned Enterprises or Regional-Owned Enterprises are under study by government agencies at the federal, regional and business entity levels, which are also tasked with implementing statutory provisions and meeting community needs (Ratminto 2005) in (T. Rama Auliansyah, 2020).

Meanwhile, Public Service is every activity carried out by the government in every activity that is profitable in a group or unit, and offers satisfaction even though the results are not tied to a physical product (Sinambela, 2010) in (Wardhani & Novyanti, 2022).

Understanding does not mean approval or acceptance and approval does not mean acceptance. Here the public understands the organization or company in terms of its products/services, activities, reputation, management behavior, and so on (Imawan, 2017).

There are 5 (five) indicators of public service quality which can be detailed as follows according to (Parasuraman, Zeithami and Berry 1988) in (et al., 2001) :

1. Reliability (reliability)
2. Responsiveness (responsiveness)
3. Guarantee (Assurance)
4. Empathy (Empathy)
5. Physical Evidence (Tangible)

In addition, all service delivery is determined by public service providers in an effort to meet recipient demands and fulfill statutory requirements. Meanwhile, public service providers, based on the Decree of the Minister for Administrative Reform, determine that Work Units and Organizational Units are included in the highest and highest categories of Government Agencies, Secretariats, departments, agencies and non-departmental government institutions in the country. Other governments, both local and national, are taking on the role of providing public services, including state and regional-owned enterprises. Meanwhile, community groups that use public services are: individuals, communities, government organizations and the business world (Indonesian Government PAN MINISTER DECREE NO 63 OF 2003, 2003).

Public service providers, such as state/government administrators, economic and development administrators, and institutions, are responsible for managing public services. The government forms independent institutions, business entities or legal entities that are authorized to carry out certain tasks and functions related to public services, business entities or legal entities that collaborate or are bound to carry out certain tasks and functions related to public services, and the general public or private sector. . carry out certain public service tasks and functions that cannot be handled or managed by the government or regional government. Three important components in public services: Providing Organization (organizer), Service recipient (Customer, Satisfaction given and/or received by service recipients (Maulidiah, 2014).

Customer satisfaction is the level of a person's feeling as a result of a comparison between the performance assessment or final product results in relation to customer expectations (Kotlet and Keller, 2013) in (Williianti, 2020).

There are 3 dimensions of forming customer satisfaction consisting of:

1. Conformity of expectations, between the product performance expected by customers and that perceived by customers
2. Interest in returning to visit, customer's willingness to visit again or repurchase the product.
3. Willingness to recommend, perceived customer recommendation to friends and family.

PERUMDA needs to develop and maintain a system that attracts and retains large numbers of customers to achieve mutual customer satisfaction. Therefore, providing something that customers like is not the definition of customer satisfaction. However, it is very important for companies to broadcast what customers actually want, when they need it, and how they can get it (Zikmund, 2003) in (Sugawara & Nikaido, 2014)

Philip Kotler stated that customer satisfaction is the emotional level felt by customers when the service they receive meets or exceeds their expectations. This shows that customer satisfaction is related to how the customer experiences using the service, whether it meets expectations or not. (Heryanto, 2018)

Customer satisfaction can be explained as an indicator of the extent to which customers are satisfied with the products or services received from the company. This is the result of a comparison between the customer's initial expectations with their perception of the experience they had or the product they received. In other words, customer satisfaction arises when the customer's perception of the product or service meets or exceeds their expectations in (Hallencreutz & Parmler, 2021).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methodology. Through document analysis, field research, interviews, observation and documentation. The process of conducting qualitative research produces descriptive data from people's written and spoken words and from the behavior they observe. This study uses public service theory focusing on five main service quality dimensions related to customer service by regional public water companies: Tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and Empathy (empathy). This research uses an interactive model data analysis procedure, which begins with data collection and continues through data reduction, data visualization, and drawing up conclusions as the final step.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The quality of service provided by PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City employees in serving and handling customer complaints is quite good. This is determined by the quality of service which is based on several indicators, namely: First, *Tangibles* are physical evidence that shows that a company exists. This includes the appearance and physical condition of the company's facilities and the surrounding environment. This is a way to show outsiders that the company provides good service. Reliability is a company's ability to fulfill promises precisely and reliably. Responsiveness is the availability to provide services quickly and accurately and provide clear information to customers. Guarantees include employee knowledge, courtesy and expertise in building customer trust. Empathy is giving genuine and personal attention to customers and trying to understand their needs (Aprilian, 2016).

### **Regional Public Company (PERUMDA) Service Quality in increasing Customer Satisfaction**

**Reliability** This includes the service provider's ability to provide consistent and reliable service, without significant errors or interruptions. Reliable services consistently meet customer expectations and deliver expected results every time they are used.

The reliability of PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City services looks professional in serving incoming customers. Whether it's paying bills or new installations, every customer is served well. If there are customers who don't understand, PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City employees patiently explain the necessary procedures. They ensure that every customer understands the information provided.

PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City consistently provides the promised services. It can be concluded that customers generally think that PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City employees have provided good service, such as installing new connections, reopening services, water meter tests, and water tank services.

**Responsiveness** refers to the ability of a person or an organization to respond quickly and effectively to requests, questions, or needs raised by customers or the environment. This involves the ability to listen attentively, understand quickly what is asked or expected, and act according to the need or situation at

hand. Responsiveness also includes the ability to respond to changes or unexpected situations with flexibility and speed, so as to resolve problems or meet customer needs efficiently.

Regarding Responsiveness, employees often say that they will take care of the reported problem and will send someone to check directly in the field. However, in reality, employees only came a few times to check. Additionally, they often take a long time to arrive, with some reports only being followed up about a week after the initial report was made. This shows that there was a delay in the response and action taken by PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City employees after receiving reports from customers.

Assurance is a commitment or promise given by public service providers to the public regarding the quality, affordability and availability of the services they provide. This aims to provide certainty to the public that the services they receive will meet the standards that have been set or expected.

PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City employees often ask what they can do to help. In one incident experienced, when there was a pipe leak underground, they immediately went to the field to look for the source of the problem. After inspection, it turned out that the pipe had broken in the ground and needed to be replaced with a new one. Apart from that, they also always provide information regarding problems that will be experienced en masse, such as power outages and other problems. Employees try to ensure customers are kept up to date on situations that may affect the service they receive.

Good empathy practices in public services can increase trust, satisfaction and relationships between service providers and the communities served. According to reports received, the caring attitude of employees is very lacking. Customers have reported several times to PERUMDA regarding water problems, but the response given was inadequate. There was a situation where water did not flow for two months, and when water was finally available, it was very disappointing because the water was cloudy and had a bad smell. Currently, the water only flows at 2 am, which is very difficult for customers because they cannot stay up in the middle of the night just to get water. In addition, there are reports that some employees in the office are less than friendly and do not welcome customers well, adding to dissatisfaction with the services provided.

Physical or tangible evidence refers to concrete or real evidence that can be felt or observed by the five human senses. These are elements of a product or service that can be seen, touched, tried, or felt directly. Examples of this physical evidence include physical products such as merchandise, product packaging, business premises, equipment, and anything that can be seen or touched by customers. In the context of services, physical evidence can include the physical environment of the service location, such as cleanliness, comfort, and the appearance and attitude of the staff providing the service. This physical evidence plays an important role in shaping customer perceptions and experiences of a product or service.

According to the information received, the facilities in the office are adequate, with all the equipment needed to improve the quality of service already available. Apart from that, not only is the physical equipment complete, but also the means for complaints have become easier with WhatsApp. Thus, customers no longer need to come to the office to report problems or ask questions, because everything can be done online through the application. This shows significant efforts to improve efficiency and comfort of service to customers.

The Cirebon City Regional Drinking Water Company (PERUMDA) has duties and obligations in organizing water processing, supply and services, through clean water management and distribution system regulation, required to always be able to make improvements in the service sector by developing services professionally in the context of efforts to provide satisfaction to its customers. Established to serve the community in an effort to provide satisfaction to its customers. Established to serve the community in fulfilling clean water needs in the Cirebon City area (Indartuti et al., 2021).

### **Regional Public Company Customer Satisfaction**

From the results of observations made by researchers, customer satisfaction at the Tirta Giri Nata K Regional Public Company, Cirebon City, can be categorized as not being optimal when viewed from the dimensions of customer satisfaction. The service received at the registration and installation stages appears to have met the customer's expectations and is in accordance with what was described by the service provider. However, the responsiveness of employees after installation seems less than satisfactory when you encounter problems or problems with the water meter.

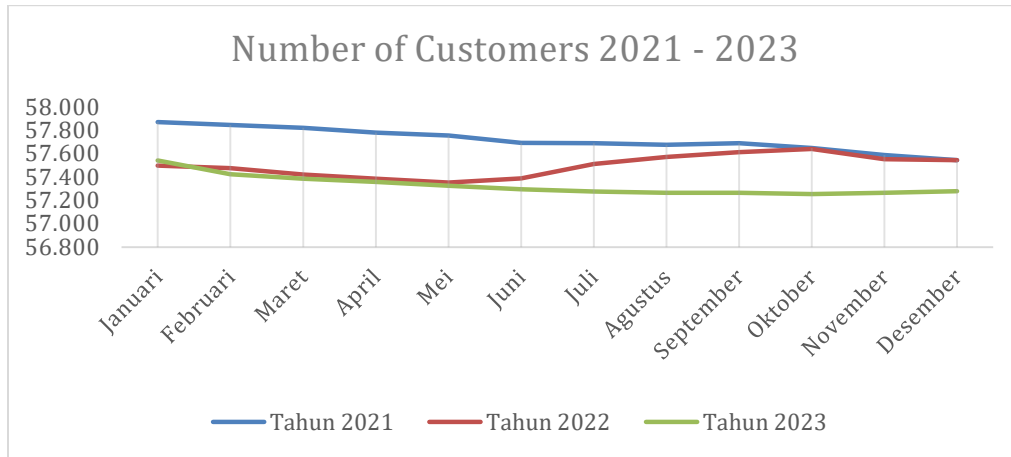
Lack of responsiveness in responding to problems or disruptions that customers experience after installation can disrupt the customer experience. Good responsiveness is the ability to respond quickly and effectively to problems or complaints raised by customers, by providing the necessary assistance or solutions in a timely manner. By returning to PERUMDA and providing constructive feedback, Customers not only give them the opportunity to improve their service, but also ensure that future customer experiences will be better. A willingness to give a second chance is also a wise attitude, because adequate facilities often need to be supported by a good response to customer needs. Thus, customers show openness to building better relationships with service providers.

Regarding interest in returning visits, customers are very satisfied with the facilities provided by PERUMDA when they visit the company office. Customer satisfaction with these facilities can be seen as the result of the company's efforts to provide adequate facilities for customer needs. Facilities that meet standards and provide comfort to customers can influence their positive perception of the company. Conveying customer dissatisfaction to PERUMDA is an important step. Informing about the experience gained provides an opportunity for PERUMDA to improve its services. Not recommending PERUMDA to neighbors at this time is a wise course of action, as customers want to ensure that they receive adequate and responsive service. If PERUMDA takes up to 7 days to respond to a complaint regarding a water meter, this could be considered an excessively long response time. Customer dissatisfaction with unfriendly employee attitudes and delays in handling complaints is normal and understandable.

In this way, customers help the process of repairing and enhancing the services provided by PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City. In the long run, this attitude also benefits you as a customer. ensuring that PERUMDA can adapt its services to be more responsive and better meet customer needs. This can result in improvements in response times, improvements in service quality, and the opportunity to have a better experience using PERUMDA services in the future. Thus, providing feedback to service providers is an important step in ensuring that customer needs are met and the service provided continues to improve.

Customer dissatisfaction occurs due to deficiencies in the attitude and responsiveness of company employees. An unfriendly attitude from employees not only reduces customer satisfaction but also creates a negative perception of the company's service as a whole. Apart from that, slow handling of complaints also has a negative impact on customer experience. In this context, the concept of

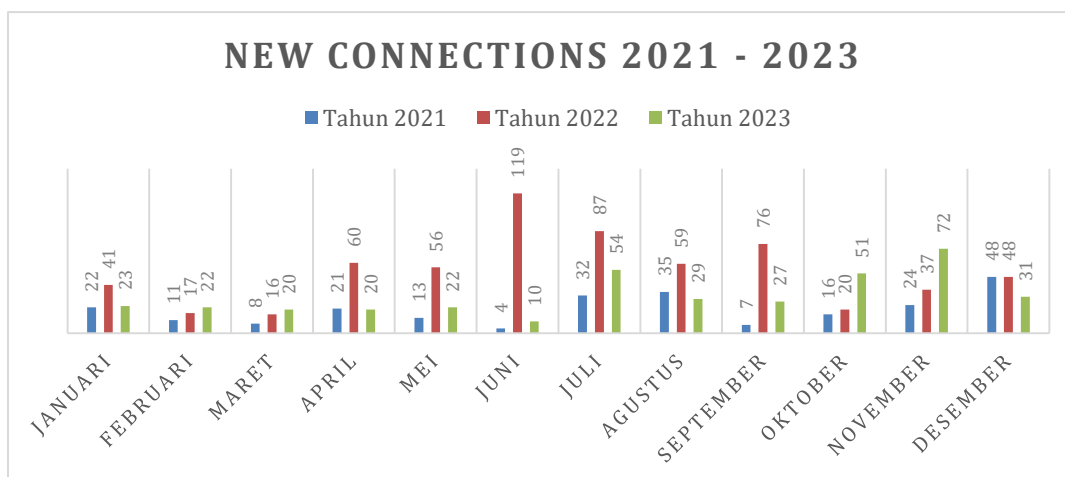
Responsiveness from the customer service dimension becomes important, where speed and accuracy in responding to customer needs and complaints are prioritized. Unfriendly attitudes and slow responsiveness create a negative perception of the company's overall service. This lack of attitude and responsiveness not only reduces customer satisfaction, but also results in a negative impact on the customer experience.



**Table 1 Number of PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata customers 2021 – 2023**

Source: Tirta Giri Nata PERUMDA Office, Cirebon City

In the three-year span from 2021 to 2023, customer count data reflects interesting dynamics in the growth or decline of a company or organization's customer base. In 2021, 57,542 customers were recorded, reflecting a strong market share or successful marketing strategy. Even though the growth may not be significant, maintaining the customer base at a high level is a positive indication. Shows an increase in customers reaching 57,547 in 2022, indicating slight but stable growth. This increase could be due to effective marketing strategies, improved service, or other factors that attract new customers. However, in 2023, the number of customers will decrease to 57,280. This could be a point of concern, and further analysis is needed to understand the causes of this decline. There may be internal or external factors influencing customer decisions or changes in market trends that need to be considered.

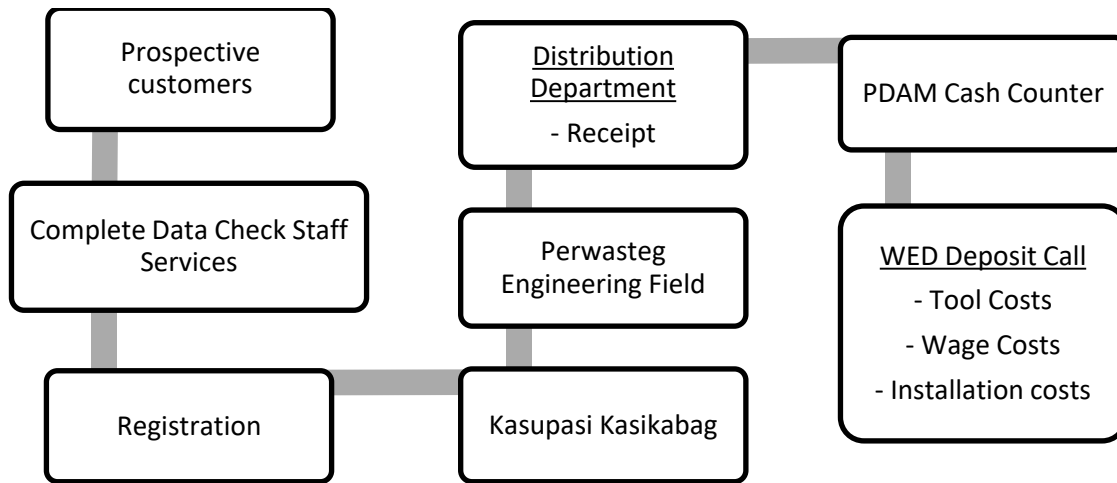


**Table 2 PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata new connection customers 2021 – 2023**

Source: Tirta Giri Nata PERUMDA Office, Cirebon City

Over the last three years, from 2021 to 2023, there has been a significant change in the number of new Connect customers. In 2021, 212 new customers were recorded, while in 2022 the number jumped sharply to 895 customers. This growth peaked in June 2022 with 119 new customers, while the month with the lowest growth occurred in March 2022 with only 16 customers. Although 2023 saw an increase in the number of new customers compared to 2021, significant monthly variations were visible in the data. November 2023 was the month with the highest growth contributing 72 new customers, while June 2023 recorded the lowest growth with only 10 new customers. This analysis reflects the dynamics of changes in new customer trends from year to year, which can be the basis for strategy and future planning for the company or organization concerned.

**New Connection Installation Flow (Computerized System)**



**Figure 1 Flow of installing new connections**  
 Source: Tirta Giri Nata PERUMDA Office, Cirebon City

The process of installing a new connection at PERUMDA Air Minum Tirta Giri Nata begins with the first step, namely prospective customers who come directly to the office can contact the marketing or subscription service section. After that, the installation application will go through the approval stage by the Technical Director. Prospective customers need to fill out the form and complete the necessary requirements as the next step. Connection installation costs include equipment costs, administration and installation fees, which need to be paid by prospective customers after receiving a deposit call signed by the General Director.

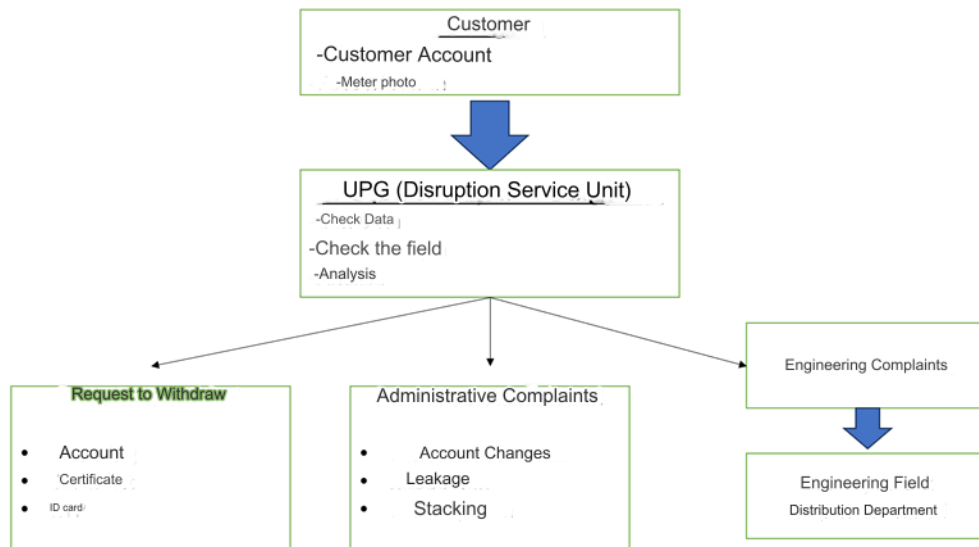
Next, prospective customers must bring proof of payment receipt and submit it to the PERUMDA Distribution department. After the administration process is complete and payment is received, it continues with the installation stage of the new connection in accordance with the previously approved application. Thus, this series of steps reflects the official procedures that prospective customers must follow to obtain a new connection installed at PERUMDA Air Minum Tirta Giri Nata.

To support the new connection process for drinking water services, Perumda Air Minum Tirta Giri Nata, Cirebon City has set requirements that need to be met by prospective customers. Prospective customers are expected to provide copies of identity documents, including photocopies of Resident Identity Card (KTP), Family Card (KK), and Land and Building Tax (PBB). In addition, home ownership documents such as a photocopy of the House Certificate or Sale and Purchase Deed are also required as part of the registration requirements.

And to ensure data accuracy and facilitate the registration process, prospective customers are also asked to attach a copy of the Drinking Water Account from the nearest customer as a reference. The implementation of these requirements aims to ensure the smooth process of new connections, as well as meeting customer data security and accuracy standards in accordance with applicable regulations. By completing the requested documents, it is hoped that new customers can enjoy drinking water services efficiently and effectively.

**Disturbance Service Unit**

**Computerized Systems**



**Figure 2 Flow of disturbance/complaint services**

Source: Tirta Giri Nata PERUMDA Office, Cirebon City

Customers who experience problems with drinking water services at the PERUMDA office are asked to go to the Disruption Service Unit. When making a complaint, they need to bring a drinking water bill or take a photo of the water meter as evidence. This complaint process is related to administration, which includes drinking water usage, requests to revoke/stop subscriptions, and changes to drinking water tariffs. To expedite the process, customers are asked to fill out a complaint form according to the type of administration required.

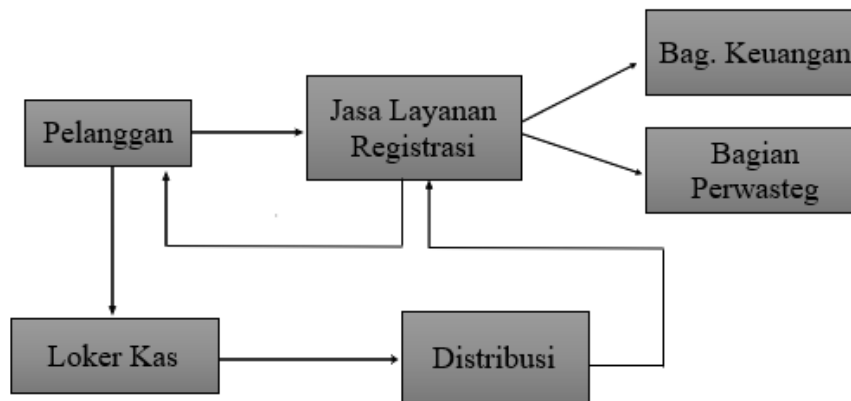
| Type of Complaint  | Year 2021 | Year 2022 | Year 2023 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Administrative Complaints<br>Change Account, Change Account & Return Money, Change Arrears, Change Arrears & Return Money, Return Money, YAD, Water Meter Test, Withdrawal, Correct Data, Change Rate, and Fixed Rate | 1,278     | 1,114     | 2,274     |
| 2. Engineering Complaints<br>Administration, Water Distribution Engineering, Water Meter Engineering Report  | 11,489    | 41,986    | 21,274    |

**Table 3 Data on types of complaints**

Source: Tirta Giri Nata PERUMDA Office, Cirebon City

Over a period of three years from 2021 to 2023, complaint data illustrates the complex dynamics of administrative and technical challenges faced by companies or organizations. In 2021, 1,278 administrative complaints and 11,489 technical complaints were recorded, reflecting problems in the administrative process and a number of technical problems expressed by customers. Then in 2022, there was a shift in the pattern of complaints, with administrative complaints decreasing to 1,114, while technical complaints increased drastically to 41,986. A significant increase in technical complaints may reflect rapid growth in customer acceptance or the launch of a new product that requires further technical attention. Large increase in 2023 in both types of complaints, with 2,274 administrative complaints and 21,274 technical complaints. This increase may be due to a variety of factors, including changes in company policy, increased business volume, or changes in technical demands from customers.

### Services Reopen



**Figure 3 Service flow reopens**

Source: Tirta Giri Nata PERUMDA Office, Cirebon City

Customers who wish to resume water service will need to submit an application and complete the necessary requirements. After that, they can submit an application directly to the registration service employee. The service employee will process the reconnection and submit it to the planning employee to calculate the reconnection RAB. Customers are expected to pay water bill arrears and reconnection fees at the PERUMDA cash counter. Next, the service employee conveys the connection installation files back to the engineering department for re-installation.

Perumda Air Minum Tirta Giri Nata Cirebon City has set several requirements that must be met by prospective customers of the reopening service. The documents requested include a photocopy of the Resident Identity Card (KTP) and a photocopy of the Land and Building Tax (PBB) as identity documents. Apart from that, prospective customers are also expected to include a photocopy of the House Certificate, Sale and Purchase Deed, or Certificate from the RT/RW as proof of house ownership. In order to maintain data transparency and accuracy, information is also needed regarding withdrawal results that are relevant to the reopening service process. Finally, as part of the administrative procedure, prospective customers are asked to attach a stamp in the amount of 10,000 Rupiah. All of these requirements are implemented with the aim of ensuring a smooth reopening service registration process and complying with applicable regulatory standards. By fulfilling these requirements, it is hoped that prospective customers can quickly enjoy the drinking water services provided by Perumda Air Minum Tirta Giri Nata, Cirebon City.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that the quality of customer service at PERUMDA Tirta Giri Nata, Cirebon City, especially in terms of administrative and technical complaint services, has still not reached an optimal level. There are still deficiencies in meeting the expected service quality dimensions and indicators. The results of interviews with several informants also showed that there were still negative responses to the quality of services provided both in terms of handling administrative and technical complaints. Companies need to carry out in-depth evaluations of existing processes and increase efforts to meet customer expectations and needs more effectively. This can help increase customer satisfaction and improve the company's reputation in the long term.

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