

# The Influence of Public Service Quality on Public Satisfaction Through Transparency, Accountability, and Competence of Village Apparatus In North Luwu Regency

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## Abstract

**Objective** -This study is intended to evaluate the quality of public administration services in relation to the level of public satisfaction in seven sub-district offices, North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. **Novelty** – This research complements previous studies by providing empirical evidence that civil servant competence is the most influential mediating variable. These results not only confirm the findings of previous studies but also enrich the development of a more comprehensive conceptual model of mediation-based public services. **Method** – The study uses a quantitative approach with instruments in the form of questionnaires and data were analyzed using PLS-SEM. **Findings** – Research shows that service quality does not directly influence public satisfaction, but has a significant indirect effect through mediating variables, particularly staff competence. **Limitations and Implications** –The limitation of this research is that the coverage area is limited to one region, so the results are not necessarily relevant for generalization to other regions with different social, cultural and bureaucratic systems. Research implications emphasizes the need for a strategy to strengthen the capacity of the apparatus by policy makers so that the effectiveness of public services can be more optimal.

**Keywords:** service\_quality; apparatus\_competence; public\_satisfaction; public\_administration; PLS-SEM.

## 1. Introduction

Public administration services are a crucial benchmark for assessing government performance, particularly at the sub-district level, which serves as the frontline provider of services to the public. In the context of bureaucratic reform and increasing demands for democracy, public services can no longer be carried out merely administratively but must prioritize principles of good governance such as openness, accountability, efficiency, participation, and professionalism [1], [2].

Three factors are crucial for improving the quality of public services. Transparency relates to public accessibility to information and the openness of the service process. Accountability emphasizes the responsibility and integrity of officials in carrying out their duties [3], [4]. Meanwhile, official competence encompasses technical skills, attitudes, and professionalism in providing effective and efficient services. However, numerous issues remain in the field, such as slow processes, minimal information transparency, and unsatisfactory interactions between officials [5], [6]. These conditions result in low public satisfaction and diminish public perception of the quality of government services [2]. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the factors influencing service quality is essential.

One relevant approach to assessing the quality of public services is to examine the influence of internal bureaucratic factors, namely transparency, accountability, and staff competence [7]. In addition to providing practical benefits for service improvement, this research is also expected to contribute to the development of academic studies in public

management, particularly regarding the integration of organizational factors and public satisfaction as service recipients.

National regulations emphasize the obligation of every public service provider to provide services that are fast, accessible, affordable, and measurable, while ensuring legal certainty and citizen rights [8]. This is reinforced by Home Affairs Ministerial Regulation No. 59 of 2021 concerning Minimum Service Standards (SPM), which emphasizes the importance of quality basic services at the sub-district level, the service unit closest to residents [9].

In North Luwu Regency, residents continue to complain about slow service, unclear information, and perceived unfriendly and unresponsive officials. Some residents even have to make repeated visits just to process civil registration documents. These problems are believed to be influenced by weak transparency, low accountability, and uneven staff competency in skills, knowledge, and work ethic. This has resulted in declining levels of public satisfaction and the overall quality of public services.

This research is needed to provide theoretical and practical contributions, particularly in developing strategies for improving public services based on good governance and improving the competence of civil servants, in order to realize excellent service oriented towards public satisfaction. The main focus of this research is to analyze the direct and indirect impact of service quality on citizen satisfaction in sub-district workplaces in North Luwu Regency.

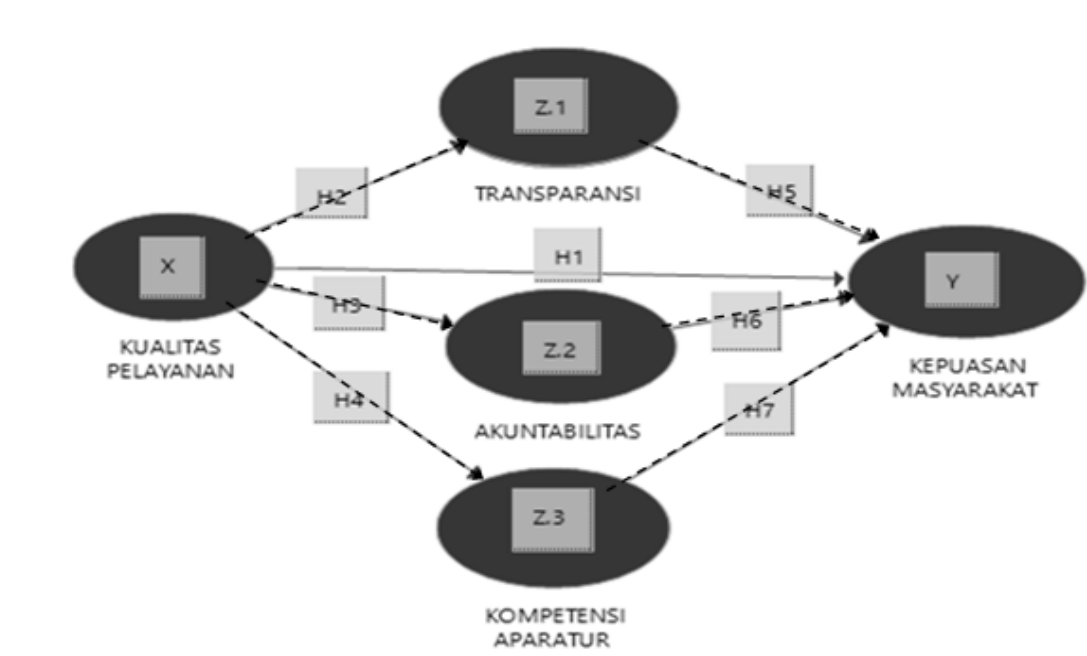



Figure I. Conceptual Framework

Information:

H1  : Direct Relationship (X  Y)

H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 and H7:  : Indirect Relationship (Mediation Path)

Research Hypothesis

Direct Path and Mediated Path Hypothesis:

1. H1: It is estimated that the Quality of Public Services (X) has a positive and significant influence on Public Satisfaction (Y) through direct channels.
2. H2: Assumed Public Service Quality (X) has a positive and significant influence on the Transparency variable (Z1).
3. H3: It is estimated that Public Service Quality (X) contributes positively and significantly to Accountability (Z2).
4. H4: Assumed The quality of public services (X) has a positive and significant influence on the competence of civil servants (Z3).
5. H5: It is estimated that The quality of public services (X) has a positive and significant impact on public satisfaction (Y) with the mediating role of the transparency variable (Z1).
6. H6: It is assumed that the quality of public services (X) has a positive and significant influence on public satisfaction (Y) through the mediation of accountability (Z2).
7. H7: It is estimated that the quality of public services (X) has a positive and significant influence on public satisfaction (Y) through the role of civil servant competence (Z3).

## 2. Methodology

The respondents were residents who visited and received services at seven sub-district offices in North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. Hypothesis testing was conducted using a structural equation model (SEM) using SmartPLS.3 software and SPSS version 22, Multivariate Analysis software with the IBM SPSS 22 program. SmartPLS is software used for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). After that, descriptive statistics were applied to examine the frequency distribution of the samples. Pearson correlation test was used to examine the relationship between  $n$  predictors (e.g., transparency, accountability, and competence affect the level of satisfaction) and criterion variables (e.g., community satisfaction) to adopt community satisfaction and followed by standard method variance (CMV) to prevent and post-detection bias techniques. This study used bootstrapping process to test the mediating and indirect impacts of the mediator variables [10].

The sample in this study was 100 community respondents who visited and received services at seven sub-district offices, North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. The type of data used is quantitative data collected from questionnaires distributed digitally using Google Forms. This study was conducted for three months in seven villages in North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. This study aims to validate the direct and indirect relationship between service quality and public satisfaction through transparency, accountability, and staff competence.

## 3. Research Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Research Results

#### Respondent Characteristics

Based on the characteristics of respondents in seven sub-districts of North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, the majority of respondents were female, totaling 60 people (60%), while male respondents numbered 40 people (40%). In terms of age, most respondents were over 40 years old, totaling 52 people (52%), followed by the 25–40 age group with 44 people (44%), and only 4 people (4%) aged  $\leq 25$  years. Regarding education level, most respondents held a Diploma/Bachelor's degree with 61 people (61%), followed by high school graduates or

equivalent with 26 people (26%), junior high school graduates with 9 people (9%), and 2 people (2%) each with elementary school and Master’s degrees (see table.1)

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Presentation
Gender	Man	40	40%
	Woman	60	60%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	≤ 25 Years	4	4%
	25-40 Years	44	44%
	> 40 Years	52	52%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Education	Elementary School	2	2%
	JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	9	9%
	High School/Equivalent	26	26%
	Diploma/Bachelor's Degree	61	61%
	Master	2	2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### Measurement Model Results

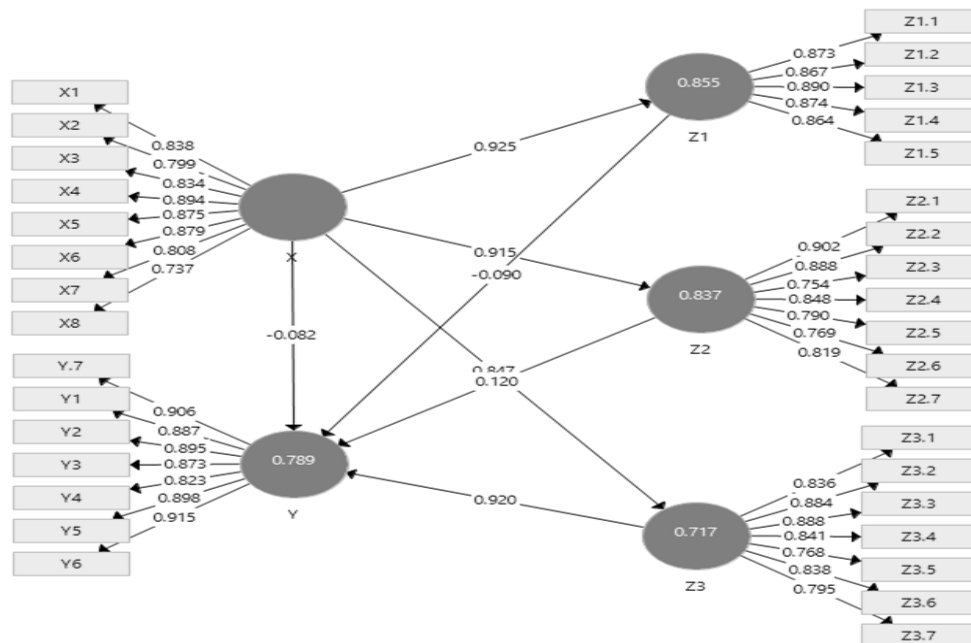


Figure II. Measurement Results

Table 2. Outer Loadings

Construct	Indicator Code	Outer Loading	Information
Service Quality (X)	X1	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X2	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X3	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X4	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X5	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X6	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X7	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Service Quality (X)	X8	0.737	Valid (lowest value)
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y1	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y2	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y3	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y4	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y5	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y6	0.915	Valid (highest value)
Public Satisfaction (Y)	Y7	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Transparency (Z1)	Z1.1 – Z1.5	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Accountability (Z2)	Z2.1 – Z2.7	$\geq 0.70$	Valid
Civil Service Competence (Z3)	Z3.1 – Z3.7	$\geq 0.70$	Valid

Based on the results of the outer loadings test in Table II, it can be explained that all indicators used in this study have loading values above 0.70, which indicates that each indicator makes a significant contribution to the construct being analyzed. Indicator Y6 provides the highest outer loading value of 0.915, while the indicator using the lowest value is X8, which is 0.737. This indicates that all indicators significantly load their respective constructs, both constructs (X) Service Quality, (Y) Public Satisfaction, (Z1) Transparency, (Z2) Accountability, and (Z3) Apparatus Competence. There are no indicators that need to be eliminated because all have met the criteria for convergent validity, namely a loading value  $> 0.70$  as required in the PLS-SEM-based measurement model. Thus, it can be concluded that the measurement sample has met the indicator validity standards and all question items can be used in further structural analysis legally and convincingly.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Service Quality (X)	0.923	$> 0.90$	0.712
Public Satisfaction (Y)	0.954	$> 0.90$	0.785
Transparency (Z1)	0.936	$> 0.90$	0.743
Accountability (Z2)	0.928	$> 0.90$	0.682
Civil Service Competence (Z3)	0.931	$> 0.90$	0.701

Based on the results of the reliability and construct validity tests shown in Table III, it can be concluded that all constructs in this research sample meet the criteria for internal

reliability and convergent validity. The Cronbach's Alpha values of all constructs are above the threshold of 0.70, with a range of values between 0.923 and 0.954. This indicates that all indicators in each construct have consistently measured the intended variables. In addition, the Composite Reliability (CR) value is also very high, above 0.90 for all constructs, indicating that these indicators have excellent internal consistency. To test convergent validity, all constructs have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50 – up to the highest value in the construct (Y) Community Satisfaction (0.785) and the lowest in the construct (Z2) Accountability (0.682) – this shows that more than 50% of the variance of each indicator is successfully explained by the related construct. Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs in this model have met validity and reliability, as a result they can be used for analysis or model testing in the next stage.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	X (Service Quality)	Y Community Satisfaction)	Z1 (Transparency)	Z2 (Accountability)	Z3 (Apparatus Competence)
X (Service Quality)	0.834	0.724	0.925	0.915	0.847
Y (Community Satisfaction)	0.724	0.886	0.707	0.804	0.886
Z1(Transparency)	0.925	0.707	0.862	0.831	0.843
Z2(Accountability)	0.915	0.804	0.831	0.826	0.857
Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	0.847	0.886	0.843	0.857	0.837

Based on the results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker criteria in Table IV, it is concluded that all constructs in this study meet the conditions of discriminant validity. This can be seen from the AVE square root value in each construct which is greater than the value of the relationship between other constructs in the same row and column. For example, the Service Quality construct (X) has an AVE square root value of 0.834, higher than its correlation with (Y) Public Satisfaction (0.724), (Z1) Transparency (0.925), (Z2) Accountability (0.915), and (Z3) Apparatus Competence (0.847). Thus, the construct (Y) Public Satisfaction has an AVE square root of 0.886, which is higher than its correlation using (Z1) Transparency (0.707), (Z2) Accountability (0.804), and (Z3) Apparatus Competence (0.886). This indicates that each construct can distinguish itself well from other constructs in the sample, which is the main requirement for good discriminant validity and is suitable for use in further analysis.

### Structural Model Results

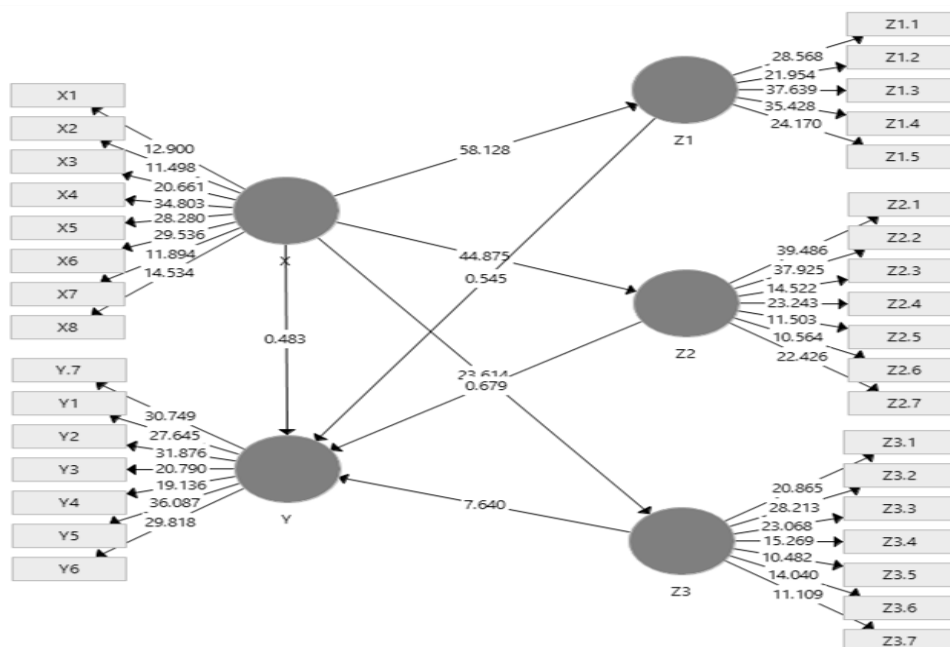


Figure III. Structural Analysis

Table 5. Path Coefficients (Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values)

Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient (β)	T. Statistics	P. Value	information
Service Quality (X) → Public Satisfaction (Y)	- 0.082	0.483	0.629	Insignificant
Service Quality (X) → Z1 (Transparency)	0.925	-	0.000	Significant
Service Quality (X) → Z2 (Accountability)	0.915	-	0.000	Significant
Service Quality (X) → Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	0.847	-	0.000	Significant
Transparency (Z1) → Public satisfaction (Y)	0.055	-	0.586	insignificant
Accountability (Z2) → Public satisfaction (Y)	0.088	-	0.498	insignificant
Civil Service Competence (Z3) → Public Satisfaction (Y)	0.920	7,640	0.000	Significant

Based on the results of the path coefficients analysis in table V, it is known that the variable X (Service Quality) does not have a direct and significant effect on Y (Public Satisfaction), with a coefficient value of -0.082, a T-statistic of 0.483 and a p-value of 0.629 (> 0.05). This indicates that the exclusive relationship between X (Service Quality) and Y (Public Satisfaction) is not statistically significant. However, Service Quality (X) is proven to have a very significant direct impact on the variables Transparency (Z1) ( $\beta = 0.925$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), Z2 (Accountability) ( $\beta = 0.915$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and Z3 (Apparatus Competence) ( $\beta = 0.847$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a very high T-statistic, indicating that X (Service Quality) plays a strong role as a predictor

of the three mediating variables. Meanwhile, in terms of the influence of mediators on Y (Public Satisfaction), only Z3 (Apparatus Competence) has a significant effect on Y (Public Satisfaction) ( $\beta = 0.920$ ,  $T = 7.640$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), while Z1 (Transparency) and Z2 (Accountability) do not have a significant effect on Y (Public Satisfaction), with p-values of 0.586 and 0.498, respectively. These results indicate that although X (Service Quality) does not have a direct effect on Y (Public Satisfaction), the indirect effect of (X) Service Quality on (Y) Public Satisfaction is most likely strongly mediated by Z3 (Apparatus Competence), which is in line with the results in the total Indirect Effect table (see table 9). Therefore, Z3 (Apparatus Competence) plays a role as the main mediator in the correlation between X (Service Quality) and Y (Public Satisfaction), and strengthens the argument that the total impact of X (Service Quality) on Y (Public Satisfaction) occurs through an indirect path.

### R-Square ( $R^2$ ) Value

The  $R^2$  value is used to determine how much the independent variable contributes to explaining the dependent variable. The  $R^2$  values for each construct are as follows (see Table 6).

Table 6. R-Square

Endogenous Variables	R-Square ( $R^2$ )	R-Square Adjusted	Information
Y (Community Satisfaction)	0.789	0.782	Strong
Z1 (Transparency)	0.855	0.851	Very strong
Z2 (Accountability)	0.837	0.832	Very strong
Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	0.717	0.710	Strong

Based on the results of the R-Square analysis in Table VI, it is known that the variable Y (Public Satisfaction) has an  $R^2$  value of 0.789, which means that approximately 78.9% of the variability of Y (Public Satisfaction) can be explained by the independent variables in the model. This indicates a strong relationship. Meanwhile, variables Z1 (Transparency) and Z2 (Accountability) with  $R^2$  values of 0.855 and 0.837, respectively, concluded that most of the variance in the construct, more than 80%, was successfully explained by the predictors included in the model. This indicates that the model has very strong explanatory power for Z1 (Transparency) and Z2 (Accountability). Variable Z3 (Apparatus Competence) also has an  $R^2$  value of 0.717, which is also included in the strong category, so it can be concluded that the sample is able to reveal variations in all endogenous variables substantially. The Adjusted  $R^2$  value is not much different from  $R^2$ , indicating sample stability and no overfitting.

### f-Square Value ( $f^2$ )

Table 7. f-Square

Relationship between variables	$f^2$ value	Interpretation	Information
X (Service Quality) $\rightarrow$ Z1 (Transparency)	0.003	Small	Not significant
X (Service Quality) $\rightarrow$ Z2 (Accountability)	5,898	Very large	Significant

X (Service Quality) → Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	5.152	Very large	Significant
Y (Public Satisfaction) → Z1 (Transparency)	0.005	Small	Not significant
Y (Public Satisfaction) → Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	2,532	Very large	Significant
Z1(Transparency) → Z2 (Accountability)	0.006	Small	Not significant

Based on the results of the predictor effect analysis (f-Square) in table VII, it is known that the variable X (Service Quality) has a very large influence on Z2 (Accountability) ( $f^2 = 5.898$ ) and Z3 (Apparatus Competence) ( $f^2 = 5.152$ ), which means that the existence of the variable X (Service Quality) is significantly able to increase variations in the constructs Z2 (Accountability) and Z3 (Apparatus Competence). Meanwhile, the influence of X (Service Quality) on Z1 (Transparency) is very small ( $f^2 = 0.003$ ), so it can be said to be insignificant. Furthermore, the variable Y (Public Satisfaction) also shows a very large influence on Z3 (Apparatus Competence) ( $f^2 = 2.532$ ), but has a very small influence on Z1 (Transparency) ( $f^2 = 0.005$ ). On the other hand, variable Z1 (Transparency) has a very small influence on Z2 (Accountability) ( $f^2 = 0.006$ ), which indicates that its contribution to increasing the variance of Z2 (Accountability) is very minimal. Overall, these results indicate that at the Village Office in North Luwu RegencySouth Sulawesi, Only the relationship between X (Service Quality) and Y (Public Satisfaction) and Z2 (Accountability) and Z3 (Apparatus Competence) has a substantive effect, while the other relationships are weak or insignificant.

#### Total Effect and Total Indirect Effect

Table 8. Total Effects

Relationship between variables	Total Effect Value	Interpretation
X (Service Quality)→ Z1 (Transparency)	0.925	very strong & significant
X (Service Quality) → Z2 (Accountability)	0.915	Very strong & significant
X (Service Quality)→ Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	0.847	very strong & significant
Y (Public satisfaction) → Z1 (Transparency)	0.724	Strong
Z1 (Transparency) → Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	0.92	very powerful & significant
Y (Public satisfaction) → Z2 (Accountability)	Low	Weak/insignificant
Y (Public satisfaction) → Z3 (Apparatus Competence)	Low	Weak/insignificant

Based on Table VIII, it is concluded that the variable X (Service Quality) has a strong total influence on all endogenous variables, especially on Z1 (Transparency) of 0.925, Z2 (Accountability) of 0.915, and Z3 (Apparatus Competence) of 0.847. These results confirm that Service Quality (X) has a real and quite large influence on all these variables. In addition, the variable Y (Public Satisfaction) also shows an influence on Z1 (Transparency) of 0.724, although the value is slightly lower than the influence of X (Service Quality). The total influence of Z1 (Transparency) to Z3 (Apparatus Competence) is also quite high, namely 0.920, Proceedings homepage: <https://icbens.umpalopo.ac.id/>

which indicates the important role of Z1 (Transparency) in mediating the relationship in the model. Meanwhile, the relationship between several other variables shows a low value such as Y (Public Satisfaction) to Z2 (Accountability) and Z3 (Apparatus Competence), which indicates a weak or insignificant influence. Overall, these results confirm that the Sub-district Office in North Luwu Regency South Sulawesi, Variable X (Service Quality) has a dominant contribution in influencing the accountability and competence of civil servants directly and through transparency.

Table 9. Total Indirect Effects  
 Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

Indirect path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Information
X (Service Quality) → Y (Customer Satisfaction)	0.806	0.820	0.169	4,781	0.000	Significant and powerful
Z1 (Transparency) → Y (Public Satisfaction)		0.000	0.000			No effect
Z2 (Accountability) → Y (Community Satisfaction)		0.000	0.000			No effect
Z3 (Apparatus Competence) → Y (Public Satisfaction)		0.000	0.000			No effect

Based on the total indirect effect analysis (see table IX), it was found that the indirect path from variable X (Service Quality) to Y (Citizen Satisfaction) has a significant value, using the original sample value of 0.806, T Statistics = 4.781, and P-value = 0.000. This indicates that the indirect impact is strong and significant from X (Service Quality) to (Y) Citizen Satisfaction, which may be mediated by other constructs in the model. Meanwhile, other indirect paths such as from Z1 (Transparency), Z2 (Accountability), and Z3 (Apparatus Competence) to Y (Citizen Satisfaction) provide very small values or even no effect (value = 0.000), as a result they do not contribute to variable Y (Citizen Satisfaction) indirectly. This will emphasize the importance of the role of variable X (Service Quality) influencing Y (Citizen Satisfaction) indirectly through certain relevant mediators.

### 3.2. Discussion

The results of this study provide an interesting overview regarding the testing of hypotheses H1 to H7 regarding the impact of public service quality on citizen satisfaction, through transparency, accountability, and apparatus competence. The original result of testing the first hypothesis H1, which stated that public service quality has a positive and significant effect on citizen satisfaction, was not proven in this study. The analysis results showed that the direct effect between service quality and public satisfaction was not significant. This condition confirms that even in the village office, the quality of administrative services, clarity, and good standards are not enough to increase public satisfaction if not manifested in real interactions through the role of the apparatus. This is in line with the findings that administrative services

often do not satisfy the public if they are not accompanied by the competence of the implementers [11].

H2, H3, and H4 were found to be significant, with public service quality having a strong influence on transparency, accountability, and staff competence. This means that the better the service quality designed, the higher the level of information disclosure (transparency), the higher the level of accountability, and the staff's ability to provide services (competence) at sub-district offices in North Luwu Regency. This confirms the theory of good governance that service quality depends not only on the system but is also reflected in openness, accountability, and the quality of human resources [1].

However, H5 and H6, which examined the role of transparency and accountability as mediators between service quality and public satisfaction, were not supported by the research results. Transparency and accountability, although significantly influenced by service quality, did not significantly influence public satisfaction. This suggests that open procedures and accountability of officials at the sub-district office are insufficient to generate satisfaction without being accompanied by friendly, prompt, and professional service.

In contrast, H7 proved strong and significant, with civil servant competence being the primary mediator in the relationship between public service quality and public satisfaction. The competencies in question include technical skills, communication skills, service ethics, and the professionalism of village officials. Competent officials are able to translate service quality standards into tangible experiences that satisfy the public. This finding reinforces competence-based management theory, which argues that individual capability is a critical factor in organizational performance [12], [13]. Similar conclusions were reported in studies emphasizing the strategic role of civil servant competence in public service success [14].

#### **4. Conclusion**

The conclusion of this study is that the quality of service at the Village Office in North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, does not have a significant direct effect on public satisfaction, but has a significant effect on the three mediating variables, namely transparency, accountability, and staff competence. Of these three variables, only staff competence has a significant effect on public satisfaction, so staff competence acts as a full mediator in the relationship between service quality and public satisfaction at the Village Office in North Luwu Regency. South Sulawesi.

Furthermore, all constructs in the model met validity and reliability criteria, including outer loading, EVA, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability tests. The high R-Square values across all endogenous constructs demonstrate the model's robustness and clarity. This finding indicates that efforts to improve community satisfaction in urban villages are not simply achieved by improving formal service aspects; instead, staff competence is a key factor in bridging the impact of service quality on community satisfaction within the context of public services.

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