An Assessment Service Delivery of Social Welfare Department Dealing With Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Group in Perak

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Abstract

A high-quality service delivery of Social Welfare Department (SWD) has encountered in promoting social inclusion towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. This paper assesses the performance of SWD in the state of Perak, Malaysia by applied a semi-structured questionnaire survey of 400 respondents from a varied category of vulnerable and disadvantaged group within Perak. This research identified there is a correlation between service delivery performed and the quality of life of the respondents in social sustainability. The outcomes associated with strong justifications will offer alternatives to help in the betterment of the delivery system for these types of groups.

Keywords: Service delivery performance; social welfare department; vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; quality of life

1. Introduction

Social inclusion by allowing equal opportunity and social equality for all has recognized to be as the basic structure of social sustainability. The need of promoting equal opportunity and social equality through the service
delivery system, specifically towards this marginalized group of people has become a principal criterion to evaluate the SWD performances in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of services delivered. The competitive and challenges environment worldwide has raised various issues that required courteous service delivery performed exclusively, awareness towards social rights of these less fortunate groups need to be promoted as it would increase their quality of life. Nonetheless, this research will highlight varies demographic characteristics of vulnerable and disadvantaged group of people in Perak and the service delivery performances rendered to them.

1.1. Research objective

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To recognize the categorization of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Perak;
- To determine the current issues regarding service delivery of SWD in Perak;
- To evaluate the performance of service delivery by SWD towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Perak;

2. Literature review

Social Sustainability often described as the practices that ensure the continuity of stability, social well-being of all members within the community. Current discussions of these well-being aspects included health, education, social interaction, equal opportunities, recreation, religious freedom and cultural-value or beliefs, expression, among others (Darchen and Ladouceur, 2013). Throughout the years, many initiatives have introduced, envisioned to increase the opportunities and directly improve the quality of life for these vulnerable and disadvantaged groups within the collective community, yet their impact in terms of outcomes is less than satisfactory (Hannon, 2005 and Rezaul Islam, 2015). Hence, they were continuing excluded from the society and faced real difficulties in accessing employment, education, housing, and public spaces and facilities. These scenarios have brought attention among the scholars and governments around the world in helping out and reducing the burden faced by these less fortunate groups of people. Therefore, the SWD in Perak, a state in Malaysia expected to provide an efficient and effective service delivery, primarily to those who currently have limited access or even no access to these services.

2.1. Excellent service delivery performance, improves the quality of life

In nowadays society, most people, including the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups demand and require assistance provided by the respective government agencies to reduce difficulty experienced by them in performing the daily activities. The best option is by providing an excellent service delivery and makes the services closest and available to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups at any time and in any area. In most cases, an excellent service delivery mechanism for this marginalized group, successfully improve their quality of life. Peter (2007) and have agreed that an excellent service delivery performance is needed to help the marginalized group of people and it arrives when the duty or jobs provided accomplish within the time given. Meanwhile, Beaker and Gerhard (1996) suggested that the measurement of service delivery performances should be done against a certain recognized standard of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed. This measurement has been used as one of indicator to attain excellent performance in delivering services specifically to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups Dercon and Krishnan (2000). Along with the availability services and assistance provided to help the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to perform their daily routines.

Lee (2008) in other hand suggested that the encouragement and support through educations towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups will be fostering the skill, self-reliance and self-confidence as part of promoting an inclusive environment in the social development.

After all, the quality of life of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups improves through excellent service delivery performance rendered by the SWD. Thus, by making sure that the quality of life and the social development of these marginalized is guaranteed, enhancement in terms of skill through increment of education and awareness will be useful in enabling the vulnerable and disadvantaged group practicing their rights and have equal opportunity to participate in social and economic activities and directly contribute to social and economic development.
2.2. Service delivery evaluation performance and customer satisfaction

The past research shows, several issues may likely force the organization alike SWD to measure customer satisfaction after the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups experienced the services. In the realm of service delivery, the citizen, including the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups received assistance or services less or far from their expectation (Auditor General’s Report, 2009). Accordingly, lack of transparency also recognized as one of the problems that denied the social rights of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups to obtain excellent service delivery. As a result, it creates numerous opportunities for corrupt and unaccountable practices which remained as some of the main issues in Malaysia and reasons the government organizations such as SWD often considered as being slow, bureaucratic and rarely innovative. For that reason, there is a vital need to evaluate the local government’s performance as the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups alarmed about quality services and the greater role expected from SWD.

In addition to the above mentioned, service delivery performance is based on the customer satisfaction and the service quality has become the important elements in ensuring customer satisfaction. Liu and Fang (2009) discussed that, the expectation on the services delivered start with customer perception and the end result of customer feeling after experienced the services provided. To make it clear, Mortazavi et al. (2009), Munusamy and Fong (2008) justified that, the service delivery is excellent when customer satisfied with the serviced provided and it involves with the nature of expectation. Hence, violations of these expectations may lead to critical post behaviour such as complaint and criticism.

2.3. The vulnerable/marginalized and disadvantaged groups

The meaning of vulnerable or vulnerability is highly evasive and has been discussed quite often by the various scholars around the world. However, Yaqub (2000) suggested the term vulnerability involve with the pressure and difficulty from internal and external dissimilarity. He further explained that, the internal and external dissimilarity occurred where “an external side of risks, shocks and stress to which an individual is subject to; and an internal side which is defenseless which resulted in terms of lack in coping without damaging loss”. Hence, experiencing loss will give harm to the individual physiology, motivational as well as economic expansion.

Vulnerability on the other hand, occurred not only by recognizing the threat, but also its responsiveness in utilization of opportunities while adjusting with the difference environment. In the meantime, the disadvantaged groups are those people locally and globally who have limited or no access services or experienced equal opportunities which often victims of injustice. These groups can include orphans, families living in poverty, children living in abusive environments, modern day slaves, victims of domestic violence, and disabled persons as stated by Farrington et.al (2002) that disadvantaged groups are “the people who are denied free access to the guaranteed rights”.

By referring to social, economic, cultural perspectives, the categorization of these groups is different depending on the geographical situation. Nevertheless, the disadvantages groups of people often consist of women, children that socially, economically, culturally facing disability. It is suggested that poverty remains as the major reason in degrading the status of these people that are categorized under disadvantaged groups (Derconand Krishnan, 2000).

2.4. Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Perak’s Department of Social welfare is under the supervision of Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. In Perak, many vulnerable and disadvantaged groups included those categorized under disability, children, youth, women, the elderly, the poor, disabled people, families, single parents and they required to register under the Social Welfare Department. Currently, the registered number of disabled people stood at 34,639 (Department of Social Welfare, 2011) shows an increasing approximately about 4000 registered in the year 2010.
3. Methodology

The data collection methods include literary sources and a face to face semi-structured questionnaire to 400 respondents from various categories of vulnerable and disadvantaged group within Perak by using the convenience sampling. The selection through non-probability sampling is due to cost, time and geographical constraints.

This research also adopts Likert-scale technique, in which respondents were asked about their level of agreement upon certain statements (Colburn, 2003). In general, the respondents were asked as to identify to what extend which respondents think the social welfare department performances should provide the services and your perception and reaction of the current service delivery mechanism provided.

The questionnaire survey was divided into three categories consists of:

- Section A: Perception and reaction of the respondents towards the effectiveness, service delivery mechanism as according to Client Charter
- Section B: Perception of respondents/clients towards overall service delivery performances of Social Welfare Department
- Section C: Respondent’s Socio-demographic characteristic

Kirch (2008) mentioned, the sample size represents the number of persons who should be included in the experimental study before the investigation commences. In determining appropriate sample size, Yamane formula applied in this research. In accordance to Yamane (1967), sample size can be determined through calculation as follows:

\[ n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \]

Where:
- \( n \) = Sample Size
- \( e \) = level of precision (assumed 10%)

There are some limitations faced by the researcher pertaining to the research, such as the research will only focus on those subjected under categories of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups according to the Social Welfare Department in the state of Perak only. Therefore, any discussions pertaining to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in other states have been excluded. To be specific, the research focuses on people with disabilities (PWD), senior citizen/elderly, children and orphanage.

The dependent variables were the perceptions of respondents on their level of satisfaction towards services rendered according to different departments available within the SWD. Meanwhile, socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents recognized as interdependent variable. A selection of these variables, purposely to represent the level of satisfaction towards services rendered by the SWD towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Perak. These also to assess the performances of departments based on respondents’ perception and expectation as asked in the questionnaire.

4. Analysis

4.1. Respondents’ socio demographic characteristics

The result below indicates that the majority of the respondents are Malay with 58.0% (232), followed by Chinese with 24.5 % (98) of the respondents. Meanwhile, Indian is the least respondents answered the questionnaire survey with 17. 5 % (70). (See Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean age of respondents was 32 years old, and majority respondents were aged between 31-40 years old which most of them are male respondents 55.3% (221). Meanwhile, the mean monthly household income reported by respondents were RM880, indicating a lower income groups than the average population of Malaysia (GDP USD7,000 or RM 22,000 annually). Additionally, the age of the respondents and education level are useful to indicate the dissimilarity way of thinking. Hence, it directly shows the role of SWD in delivering services to customers. Thus, the different age of the group and education level would be presenting the differences of perception which can be a reliable into this research.

4.2. Analysis of respondents’s satisfaction

Various chi-square tests have been carried out to determine whether socio-demographic characteristics and performance of SWD service delivery rendered to the vulnerable and disadvantaged community members. The hypothesis tested stated as follows:
- Age vs. Perception of the current overall service delivery performance
- Age vs. Expectation towards the service delivery performance
- Age vs. Expectation of future improvement of the service delivery quality

Table 2. Respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20 years old</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21—30 years old</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years old</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years old</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;51 years old</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square analysis had been carried out on two variables (Independent variable vs. dependent variable) intended to identify whether the two variables are interrelated. The independent variable was the age, while, the dependent variable was the Perception of the current overall service delivery performance, expectation service, delivery performance and expectation of the future improvement of the service delivery quality.
The tests of any influence of age (independent variable) on the selected dependent variables showed the following results. Based on the Table 1, the calculated Pearson chi-square value of 13.555 being greater than the critical value of 9.488 at the degree of freedom of 4, the p-value was 0.009, 0.036 and 0.001 (p<0.001) less than the alpha level of significance of 0.05, it can be concluded that age indeed have influenced the performance of SWD includes the perception of the current overall service delivery performance, expectation towards the service delivery performance and expectation of future. In other words, younger or older respondents have not been different in performance of SWD service delivery. Respondents surveyed believed that, throughout the years, they expecting future improvement of the service delivery quality as to promote equal opportunities among the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Table 3. Analysis of respondent’s satisfaction on service delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4. Granting services required by clients with the right answer at the first attempt</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Giving the right information on the process that is required by the customers</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Providing services and handling customers’ problems within the time scheduled</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. Providing services as been promised</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rating value given in the questionnaire survey form as below:  
Scale: Excellent (5); Good (4); Satisfied (3); Less satisfied (2); Poor (1)

On average, the result showed the highest mean score at 3.15 which was in between of satisfactory (score=3) and good (score=4). Most respondents preferred the sub service of (Q4: Granting a service require from the customer with the right process). The finding above shows that, most of the respondents satisfied with the services delivered to them except sub service of (Q3: Providing services as been promised) with mean score 2.7; between less satisfied (score 2) and satisfied (score 3). It can be explained that, disagreement on this sub service due to delay processing, waiting time for their application to be processed and answered and delay in receiving their assistances within the time schedule.

Table 4. Analysis of respondent’s satisfaction with customer service aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Customer feeling safe while dealing with the respective agencies</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. Convenient operation hours</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. Services provided achieve your expectation</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. The concept of &quot;Customer always Rights” and “Customer always First” is applied</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5. Overall service Performance</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table presented the analysis on customer service through service delivery rendered to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The preferred sub service was (Q1: Customer feeling safe while dealing with the respective agencies) with the mean of 3.2 which described the service was between satisfactory (score 3) and good (score 4). The respondents satisfied with the operation hours with score means 3. Meanwhile, both sub service (Q4: Services provided achieve your expectation) and (Q2: the concept of “Customer always Rights” and “Customer always First” is applied) received scores mean 2.9 which indicates the service between less satisfied (score 2) and satisfied (score 3). Meanwhile, the overall service performance (2.8) recorded as the lowest mean score which describe the
respondents still not satisfy with current service delivery performances.

5. Discussion

Overall findings illustrate the service delivery performances of government agencies dealing with the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are categorized under satisfactory. Thus, the service delivery of government agencies that dealing with the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Thus, these are the requirement for service delivery improvement in terms of customer service aspects, Social Welfare Department’s Staff and overall service performances in ensuring the government agency’s transformation successful. The overall service performances are still less satisfied mainly because the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups did not receive services as they have been promised and the services did not achieve their expectations. Hence, dealing with the vulnerable and disadvantaged clients is challenging as most of them experienced difficulty in their life, low self-esteem which resulted from diseases, health problems, disadvantage and hardship. Thus, the vulnerable and disadvantaged tend to have high expectation, impatient and sensitive while receives services. Thus, it can be suggested that, there is need in improving service delivery while dealing with the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Additionally, rejecting good services to these least fortunate groups is likely rejecting their rights to have equal opportunities in the society.

6. Conclusion

Realization of the importance of social security, of this so less fortunate group of people has become one of the indicators to measure the effectiveness and efficiency service delivery practiced by the government, indirectly ensure social sustainability. In addition to that, this research attempt to highlights the issues of service delivery pertaining to these less fortunate of people and in the same time identifying relationship between service delivery system performed by government agencies and quality of life in the context of social sustainability. Therefore, service delivery improvement in terms of customer service aspects, Social Welfare Department’s Staff and overall service performance always gives critical impact on the potential for local government to promote the establishment of the administrative system that is responsive and dynamic towards the needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged group.

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