

Citizen Satisfaction Mediates Administrative Service and Complaint Handling Quality Effects on Trust

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Abstract

Citizen trust in local government is shaped not only by the availability of public services but also by how citizens evaluate their service experiences. This study examines the effects of administrative service quality and complaint handling quality on citizen trust through citizen satisfaction in district-level public services in Jakarta. A quantitative explanatory survey was conducted among Jakarta residents who had experience with district administrative services and official digital complaint channels. Using convenience sampling, the study analyzed 397 eligible respondents. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. Administrative service quality and complaint handling quality significantly strengthen citizen satisfaction. Administrative service quality also has a significant direct effect on citizen trust, whereas complaint handling quality does not directly strengthen trust. Citizen satisfaction emerges as the strongest mechanism in explaining trust and mediates the effects of both service quality dimensions. The mediation pattern indicates that complaint handling quality builds trust primarily when citizens first experience satisfaction with the complaint process. The study contributes by demonstrating that administrative service quality and complaint handling quality follow distinct trust-building pathways: administrative service quality strengthens trust both directly and through satisfaction, whereas complaint handling quality builds trust primarily through citizen satisfaction. These findings emphasize that responsive, transparent, clear, and solution-oriented public services are essential for strengthening citizen evaluations of local government. Managerial priorities include improving staff competence, service information, complaint follow-up transparency, solution accuracy, and certainty of resolution.

Keywords: administrative service quality, complaint handling quality, citizen satisfaction, citizen trust, public service

Introduction

Public service quality is a visible test of local government performance because citizens encounter government institutions through administrative procedures, information services, and complaint resolution. District offices in Jakarta operate at the frontline of this relationship: citizens evaluate procedures, requirements, service time, staff capability and behavior, clarity of information, and the physical convenience of service facilities. Evidence from Indonesian public services shows that administrative service quality is associated with higher citizen satisfaction, particularly when procedures are clear, response time is reasonable, and staff interactions meet user expectations (Kulla et al., 2025; Dewi et al., 2025).

Citizen evaluation also extends beyond face-to-face administrative encounters. The Jakarta Provincial Government operates the *Cepat Respon Masyarakat* complaint management system, integrated with JAKI, to receive, route, monitor, and resolve citizen reports. The system is intended to make complaint handling more responsive, efficient, and transparent. Previous studies have examined its implementation, effectiveness, responsiveness, validation process, and coordination across public agencies (Amatulloh & Tuti, 2023; Azzahra & Nazriah, 2023; Mashpufah et al., 2024; Islami et al., 2024). This literature establishes the operational importance of the complaint system, but it leaves an important managerial question: whether citizens' perceptions of complaint handling quality are converted into satisfaction and, subsequently, trust in local government.

Official data underline the growing importance of this question. Citizen reports through Jakarta's complaint channels increased from 173,327 in 2023 to 185,852 in 2024, while the reported completion rate declined from more than 97.7 percent to 96.8 percent (Jakarta Smart City, 2025). The thesis data source also records a continued increase in complaint volume in 2025 (Jakarta Smart City, 2026). A high completion rate alone cannot fully represent citizen experience because citizens also evaluate response speed, status transparency, follow-up clarity, solution accuracy, staff communication, and certainty of resolution. Complaint handling research similarly shows that communication, fairness, and the way complaints are processed can shape public satisfaction beyond the administrative fact that a case has been closed (Putera et al., 2025).

Citizen satisfaction provides a plausible mechanism linking service experience to trust. Expectation Confirmation Theory explains satisfaction as an evaluation formed when actual experience confirms or exceeds prior expectations (Oliver, 1980, 1997; Bhattacharjee, 2001). In public services, expectations concern not only the final output but also the quality and fairness of the process. Satisfaction, once formed, can influence subsequent judgments about institutional capability, integrity, fairness, transparency, and reliability. Studies of electronic government and public services support this sequence: service quality can increase satisfaction, and satisfaction can strengthen citizen trust (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Taufiqurokhman et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2025).

The empirical evidence, however, is not fully consistent regarding direct effects on trust. Some studies report that public or electronic service quality directly improves public trust (Taufiqurokhman et al., 2024; Sienna et al., 2025), whereas others find that service quality affects satisfaction but does not directly increase trust (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Nuralmasari, 2025). This inconsistency suggests that satisfaction should be tested explicitly as a mediating mechanism rather than assuming that better service processes automatically produce institutional trust. The issue is especially relevant to digital complaint handling, where users can experience a responsive interface or communication process without necessarily concluding that the institution is trustworthy until the complaint outcome is satisfactory.

Three related gaps therefore remain. First, an empirical gap exists because previous findings are inconsistent regarding whether service quality strengthens citizen trust directly or primarily through satisfaction. This inconsistency is particularly important for complaint handling, where process quality may improve citizens' immediate evaluations without independently producing institutional trust. Second, a contextual gap remains because studies of Jakarta's complaint management system have largely focused on implementation, responsiveness, effectiveness, validation, and inter-agency coordination (Amatulloh & Tuti, 2023; Azzahra & Nazriah, 2023; Mashpufah et al., 2024; Islami et al., 2024), while

quantitative evidence linking citizens' evaluations of complaint handling quality to satisfaction and trust at the district-service level remains limited. Third, a theoretical gap exists because administrative service encounters and complaint-handling encounters are often treated as comparable manifestations of service quality, even though they expose citizens to different forms of institutional evidence. Administrative encounters provide immediate and observable cues regarding staff competence, procedural clarity, fairness, and consistency, whereas complaint handling involves a longer evaluative process in which responsiveness and transparency must eventually be confirmed by adequate follow-up and problem resolution.

This distinction provides the theoretical novelty of the study. Administrative service quality may generate trust through both a direct institutional-signaling route and an indirect satisfaction route because citizens can immediately observe the competence, fairness, and reliability of the service provider during the encounter. In contrast, complaint handling quality is more likely to require an evaluative bridge through satisfaction because response speed, status transparency, and communication alone may be insufficient to establish trust until citizens judge the overall complaint process and resolution as satisfactory. Thus, the two service interfaces are expected to generate different routes toward institutional trust even though both originate from citizen evaluations of service quality.

Accordingly, this study integrates administrative service quality and digital complaint handling quality within a single district-level model of citizen trust. The study aims to analyze the effects of administrative service quality and complaint handling quality on citizen satisfaction and citizen trust, and to test the mediating role of citizen satisfaction in both relationships among district service users in Jakarta. By doing so, the study distinguishes direct trust-building effects from satisfaction-mediated effects across two fundamentally different citizen-government service encounters.

Expectation Confirmation Theory and Citizen Satisfaction

Expectation Confirmation Theory proposes that satisfaction develops through a comparison between prior expectations and experienced performance. Confirmation occurs when actual performance is consistent with or exceeds expectations, whereas negative disconfirmation occurs when experience falls below expectations (Oliver, 1980, 1997). Bhattacharjee (2001) extended this logic to information systems, showing that confirmation and perceived usefulness shape satisfaction and subsequent behavior. The same evaluative logic is applicable to public services because citizens approach government offices and digital channels with expectations regarding clarity, timeliness, fairness, accessibility, and problem resolution.

Satisfaction is therefore treated in this study as a post-experience evaluation rather than a simple emotional reaction. The citizen assesses the service process, service result, staff interaction, complaint follow-up, and problem resolution. Satisfaction can then become a bridge between service quality and a broader institutional judgment such as trust. The role of satisfaction as a consequential evaluative construct is also evident in organizational research, where job satisfaction has been associated with favorable discretionary behavior (Haji et al., 2021). Although employee and citizen settings differ, both illustrate that satisfaction can transmit the meaning of an experienced service or work environment into subsequent attitudes and behavior.

Administrative Service Quality

Administrative service quality refers to citizens' evaluations of the process and outcome of district administrative services. The construct in this study covers ease of procedures, clarity of requirements, reasonable service time, staff competence, staff behavior, clarity of information, and facility comfort. These indicators reflect the broader service quality logic of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1988), adapted to the operational characteristics of local public administration.

Quality is not limited to speed or physical facilities. Citizens also infer institutional competence and integrity from consistent procedures, accurate information, professional staff, and fair treatment. Fairness is particularly important because equal treatment is both a service attribute and an institutional signal. Research in a different organizational setting has similarly shown that justice perceptions can shape downstream attitudes and behavioral responses (Haji, 2023), supporting the broader proposition that perceived fairness carries evaluative consequences beyond the immediate transaction. In public services, this signal can contribute to both satisfaction and trust.

Complaint Handling Quality

Complaint handling quality is defined as citizens' evaluations of how public complaints are received, processed, communicated, followed up, and resolved through official channels. The construct includes response speed, transparency of complaint status, ease of reporting, clarity of follow-up, accuracy of the solution, staff communication, and certainty of resolution. Studies of Jakarta's complaint system emphasize responsiveness, validation, transparency, coordination, and follow-up as central operational features (Amatulloh & Tuti, 2023; Islami et al., 2024; Mashpufah et al., 2024).

Complaint handling is an evaluative journey rather than a single response event. A fast acknowledgement may signal attentiveness, but satisfaction is unlikely to be sustained if the subsequent process is unclear or the final solution does not address the reported problem. Evidence from complaint management in Indonesian public institutions indicates that service justice, communication, and interaction quality affect public satisfaction (Putera et al., 2025). This makes complaint handling quality especially suitable for testing a mediated trust mechanism: citizens may first evaluate whether the complaint experience is satisfactory before generalizing that experience into trust in the institution.

Citizen Trust

Citizen trust is conceptualized as confidence that district government has the capability, integrity, fairness, transparency, and commitment needed to address citizen needs. Trust is broader than satisfaction with a particular transaction because it concerns the citizen's belief that the institution can be relied upon in future interactions. Prior studies show that service quality, accountability, staff performance, and satisfaction may contribute to public trust, but the strength of direct service-quality effects varies across service settings (Azizah et al., 2024; Pramuditha et al., 2024; Sienna et al., 2025).

The distinction between transactional evaluation and institutional trust is central to this study. A service may be technically adequate without immediately changing trust, particularly when citizens have limited direct experience with a digital complaint process. Conversely, repeated or highly salient satisfactory experiences can provide evidence that the institution is

competent and dependable. This theoretical distinction supports the placement of citizen satisfaction as a mediator between service quality and trust.

Research Hypothesis Development

Administrative Service Quality and Citizen Satisfaction

Administrative services that are simple, clear, timely, professional, and comfortable are more likely to confirm citizens' expectations and generate favorable evaluations. Indonesian evidence at local service units consistently links administrative or public service quality with citizen satisfaction (Kulla et al., 2025; Dewi et al., 2025). Under Expectation Confirmation Theory, higher perceived performance should therefore increase satisfaction.

H1: Administrative service quality has a positive effect on citizen satisfaction.

Complaint Handling Quality and Citizen Satisfaction

Citizens evaluate complaint channels through the responsiveness and transparency of the process as well as the adequacy of the eventual solution. Responsiveness, status visibility, clear follow-up, and communication reduce uncertainty and signal that the complaint is being handled seriously (Islami et al., 2024; Masykur et al., 2024). Complaint justice and communication also contribute to public satisfaction (Putera et al., 2025).

H2: Complaint handling quality has a positive effect on citizen satisfaction.

Administrative Service Quality and Citizen Trust

Direct encounters with district personnel provide citizens with observable cues about competence, integrity, fairness, and consistency. Studies have reported positive relationships between public service quality and trust (Taufiqurokhman et al., 2024; Sienna et al., 2025), although other studies indicate that the effect may depend on satisfaction. Citizens may form an initial sense of trust directly from the quality of the service they receive, even before they evaluate their overall satisfaction. Clear procedures, consistent requirements, and professional and fair treatment can immediately signal that the district government is competent, reliable, and trustworthy. This direct relationship is different from the mediated pathway, where citizens first evaluate their overall service experience before that satisfaction develops into trust. A positive direct relationship is therefore expected because administrative service is a recurring and visible institutional interface.

H3: Administrative service quality has a positive effect on citizen trust.

Complaint Handling Quality and Citizen Trust

A responsive and transparent complaint system can signal government accountability and willingness to solve citizen problems. Such signals should, in principle, strengthen confidence in the institution. Yet prior evidence also suggests that the direct effect of digital service quality on trust can be weak when citizens have not translated process quality into a satisfactory experience (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Nuralasari, 2025). The hypothesis is stated positively to test whether complaint handling quality can independently build trust.

H4: Complaint handling quality has a positive effect on citizen trust.

Citizen Satisfaction and Citizen Trust

Satisfaction represents a consolidated evaluation of whether service experience met expectations. When citizens are satisfied with processes, results, staff interactions, complaint

follow-up, and problem resolution, they receive evidence that the institution is capable and dependable. Prior e-government and public service studies identify satisfaction as a strong antecedent of trust (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2025).

H5: Citizen satisfaction has a positive effect on citizen trust.

Mediating Role of Citizen Satisfaction

Expectation confirmation implies that service performance may shape broader institutional judgments through an intermediate evaluative state. If administrative service quality generates satisfaction, the resulting positive evaluation should strengthen trust. Recent management research using mediation models also demonstrates that antecedents may exert their strongest effects through an intervening psychological or evaluative mechanism rather than through direct paths alone (Haji, 2026).

H6: Citizen satisfaction mediates the effect of administrative service quality on citizen trust.

Mediating Role of Citizen Satisfaction in Complaint Handling

Complaint handling is particularly likely to require an evaluative bridge because process visibility or responsiveness does not guarantee that citizens judge the outcome positively. When the process produces satisfaction, citizens have a stronger basis for extending a complaint-specific evaluation into institutional trust. This mechanism is consistent with evidence that service-quality effects on trust can operate through satisfaction (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2025).

H7: Citizen satisfaction mediates the effect of complaint handling quality on citizen trust.

Research Model

The research model places administrative service quality and complaint handling quality as exogenous constructs, citizen satisfaction as the mediator, and citizen trust as the endogenous outcome. Direct paths from both service-quality constructs to satisfaction and trust are estimated together with the satisfaction-to-trust path and the two indirect effects.

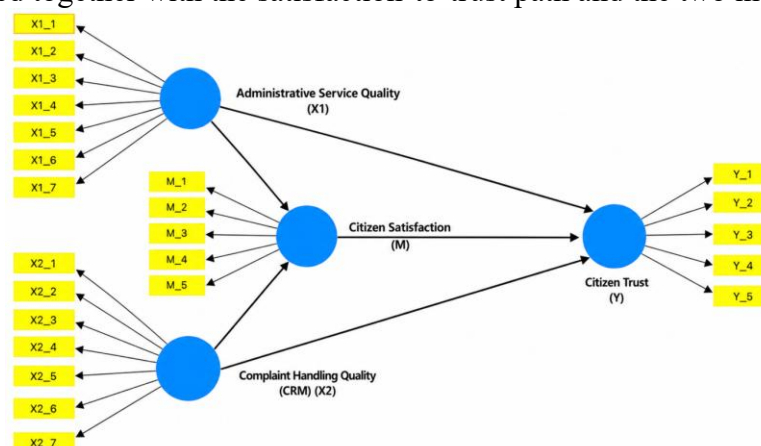


Figure 1. Research model

Method

This study used a quantitative explanatory survey to examine the relationships among administrative service quality, complaint handling quality, citizen satisfaction, and citizen

trust. The study was conducted in Jakarta and covered Central Jakarta, North Jakarta, West Jakarta, South Jakarta, East Jakarta, and the Thousand Islands. The target population consisted of Jakarta residents with relevant experience of district administrative services and official complaint channels.

Sampling used a non-probability convenience approach because the exact number of residents meeting the required experience criteria was unknown. To ensure that respondents were able to evaluate the services examined in this study, participants were required to be Jakarta residents who had used district administrative services within the previous two years and had some familiarity with the official complaint channels. For the complaint-handling construct, however, direct experience was considered particularly important because evaluations of response speed, follow-up clarity, solution accuracy, and resolution certainty are more meaningful when respondents have actually interacted with the complaint process. Respondents who had submitted a complaint, monitored its progress, or received follow-up information were therefore considered to have direct complaint-handling experience, whereas those who had only read information about or were aware of the channel were treated as having indirect exposure.

The minimum sample size was set at 385 respondents using the Lemeshow approach for an unknown population, which also exceeded the minimum sample requirement considered appropriate for PLS-SEM analysis. Data were collected online through Google Forms from 23 to 26 July 2026. A total of 423 responses were received. Eleven responses were excluded because the respondents had not used district administrative services within the previous two years, and 15 were excluded because they had no use, access, monitoring, knowledge, or interaction with the official complaint channels. The final analytical sample comprised 397 respondents. Among these respondents, 222 reported direct experience with the complaint process through submitting a complaint, monitoring its progress, or receiving follow-up information. This distinction was considered when interpreting the complaint-handling results because respondents with direct experience were better positioned to evaluate the quality of complaint resolution than those with informational exposure only.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Administrative service quality was measured with seven indicators: procedure simplicity, requirement clarity, service speed, staff competence, staff behavior, information clarity, and facility comfort. Complaint handling quality was measured with seven indicators: response speed, complaint-status transparency, reporting ease, follow-up clarity, solution accuracy, staff communication, and certainty of resolution. Citizen satisfaction was measured with five indicators covering the service process, service results, staff, complaint follow-up, and problem resolution. Citizen trust was measured with five indicators covering staff capability, service integrity, fairness, transparency, and confidence in the district's ability to resolve citizen needs.

Data analysis used SmartPLS 4. The measurement model was evaluated through outer loadings, average variance extracted, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2021). The structural model was assessed using inner variance inflation factors, coefficients of determination, effect sizes, standardized root mean square residual, and predictive assessment. Hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping; effects were considered significant when the t-statistic was at least 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05. Mediation was evaluated using specific indirect effects, confidence intervals, total

effects, and variance accounted for. Recent PLS-SEM mediation studies illustrate the value of examining direct and indirect pathways jointly rather than interpreting direct effects in isolation (Haji, 2026).

Participation was voluntary. Respondents received information about the academic purpose of the survey, confidentiality of their responses, screening criteria, and consent to use their responses for research. Only responses satisfying the screening requirements were retained for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Profile and Descriptive Results

The final sample consisted of 397 respondents, or 93.85 percent of the 423 collected responses. Men represented 56.42 percent of the sample and women 43.58 percent. The largest age group was 26-35 years (29.72 percent), followed by 36-45 years (25.94 percent). Respondents were distributed across all Jakarta administrative areas, with the largest share living in East Jakarta (25.44 percent). Most respondents had recent service experience: 63.73 percent had used district services within the previous year. Experience with the complaint channels varied from direct reporting and monitoring to reading information or knowing the channel without direct use, an important consideration when interpreting the complaint-handling results.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	224	56.42
	Female	173	43.58
Age	17-25	66	16.62
	26-35	118	29.72
	36-45	103	25.94
	46-55	75	18.89
	>55	35	8.82
Region	Central Jakarta	54	13.60
	North Jakarta	69	17.38
	West Jakarta	75	18.89
	South Jakarta	84	21.16
	East Jakarta	101	25.44
	Thousand Islands	14	3.53
District service use	Within 6 months	132	33.25
	Within 1 year	121	30.48
	Within 2 years	144	36.27

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Complaint-channel experience	Made a report	76	19.14
	Monitored a report	82	20.65
	Received follow-up information	64	16.12
	Read/knew channel information	126	31.74
	Knew channel, no direct use	49	12.34

Source: Primary data, 2026.

Construct means were above the midpoint of the five-point scale, but the complaint-handling construct received the lowest overall evaluation. Administrative service quality had the highest construct mean (3.911), followed by citizen satisfaction (3.743), citizen trust (3.668), and complaint handling quality (3.601). The lowest complaint-handling indicator was clarity of follow-up (3.453), and the lowest satisfaction indicator was satisfaction with complaint follow-up (3.647). This parallel suggests that follow-up clarity is a practical weakness connecting the complaint process with citizen evaluation.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by construct

Construct	Mean	SD	Highest indicator	Lowest indicator
Administrative service quality (X1)	3.911	0.818	Staff polite, friendly, fair (3.987)	Staff competence (3.834)
Complaint handling quality (X2)	3.601	0.903	Clear/communicative information (3.698)	Follow-up clarity (3.453)
Citizen satisfaction (M)	3.743	0.863	Problem resolution (3.814)	Complaint follow-up (3.647)
Citizen trust (Y)	3.668	0.844	Staff capability (3.781)	Ability to resolve citizen needs (3.592)

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Measurement Model

All 24 indicators were retained. Outer loadings ranged from 0.731 to 0.873, exceeding the 0.70 criterion. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.839 to 0.905, composite reliability from 0.886 to 0.925, and average variance extracted from 0.609 to 0.639. These results indicate satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. Discriminant validity was also supported: each Fornell-Larcker diagonal value exceeded the corresponding inter-construct correlations, each indicator loaded highest on its intended construct, and heterotrait-monotrait ratios ranged from 0.486 to 0.871, below the 0.90 threshold.

Table 3. Measurement model reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Loading range	Cronbach α	rho_A	CR	AVE
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Construct		Loading range	Cronbach α	rho_A	CR	AVE
Citizen satisfaction (M)		0.765-0.850	0.858	0.860	0.898	0.638
Administrative service quality (X1)		0.731-0.847	0.897	0.899	0.919	0.620
Complaint handling quality (X2)		0.739-0.873	0.905	0.910	0.925	0.639
Citizen trust (Y)		0.765-0.800	0.839	0.840	0.886	0.609

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Structural Model

Inner variance inflation factors ranged from 1.240 to 1.987, indicating no problematic collinearity among predictors. The model explained 49.7 percent of the variance in citizen satisfaction and 56.1 percent of the variance in citizen trust, both interpreted as moderate explanatory power. Administrative service quality had a large effect on satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.438$), and citizen satisfaction had a large effect on trust ($f^2 = 0.449$). Complaint handling quality had a smaller effect on satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.140$), whereas its direct effect on trust was very small ($f^2 = 0.003$). Model fit was favorable, with a standardized root mean square residual of 0.044 and a normed fit index of 0.916. Predictive assessment was also positive: construct-level predictive relevance values were 0.489 for satisfaction and 0.354 for trust, and the PLS prediction errors were lower than the linear-model and indicator-average benchmarks across all endogenous indicators.

Table 4. Explanatory and predictive assessment

Endogenous construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ² predict	Interpretation
Citizen satisfaction (M)	0.497	0.494	0.489	Moderate explanatory power; positive predictive relevance
Citizen trust (Y)	0.561	0.558	0.354	Moderate explanatory power; positive predictive relevance

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping supported four of the five direct structural paths. Administrative service quality significantly increased citizen satisfaction and citizen trust. Complaint handling quality significantly increased citizen satisfaction but did not have a significant direct effect on citizen trust. Citizen satisfaction had the strongest structural effect in the model, with a coefficient of 0.625. The results therefore support H1, H2, H3, and H5, while H4 is rejected.

Table 5. Direct-effect hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	X1 $\rightarrow$ M	0.523	14.339	<0.001	Supported

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H2	$X2 \rightarrow M$	0.296	7.286	<0.001	Supported
H3	$X1 \rightarrow Y$	0.138	2.783	0.005	Supported
H4	$X2 \rightarrow Y$	0.046	1.075	0.282	Not supported
H5	$M \rightarrow Y$	0.625	13.307	<0.001	Supported

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Both indirect effects were significant. The indirect effect of administrative service quality on trust through satisfaction was 0.327, with a 95 percent confidence interval from 0.264 to 0.396. The direct effect remained significant, and the variance accounted for was 70.32 percent; the thesis therefore classifies this relationship as partial mediation. The indirect effect of complaint handling quality on trust through satisfaction was 0.185, with a 95 percent confidence interval from 0.131 to 0.247. Because the direct complaint-handling effect was not significant and the variance accounted for was 80.09 percent, satisfaction is classified as a full mediator. H6 and H7 are supported.

Table 6. Indirect effects and mediation results

Hyp.	Indirect path	β	t	p	95% CI	VAF	Mediation	Result
H6	$X1 \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$	0.327	9.529	<0.001	0.264-0.396	70.32%	Partial	Supported
H7	$X2 \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$	0.185	6.296	<0.001	0.131-0.247	80.09%	Full	Supported

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2026.

Discussion

Administrative Service Quality as a Driver of Satisfaction and Trust

The positive effect of administrative service quality on satisfaction is the strongest antecedent-to-satisfaction relationship in the model ($\beta = 0.523$; $f^2 = 0.438$). This result indicates that the routine administrative encounter remains the most influential service experience in forming citizen satisfaction. The descriptive evidence clarifies why: courteous, friendly, and fair staff behavior received the highest assessment, whereas staff competence received the lowest. Citizens appear to appreciate interpersonal treatment, but satisfaction can be strengthened further when courteous behavior is paired with procedural expertise, accurate information, and effective problem solving. The result supports Kulla et al. (2025) and Dewi et al. (2025) and is consistent with Expectation Confirmation Theory because high-quality service confirms expectations about how a district office should perform.

Administrative service quality also had a significant direct effect on trust, but the coefficient was small ($\beta = 0.138$; $f^2 = 0.024$). This distinction is substantively important. Direct service encounters provide immediate institutional signals: clear procedures can signal competence, consistent rules can signal integrity, and fair treatment can signal institutional justice. Yet these signals alone explain only a small portion of trust formation. The stronger pathway operates through satisfaction. This result helps reconcile prior evidence: it agrees with studies reporting a positive direct service-quality effect on trust (Taufiqurokhman et al.,

2024; Sienna et al., 2025) while also showing why studies that emphasize satisfaction as an intervening mechanism remain theoretically plausible (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Nuralmasari, 2025).

Complaint Handling Quality Requires Satisfaction Before Trust

Complaint handling quality significantly increased satisfaction ($\beta = 0.296$) but did not directly increase trust ($\beta = 0.046$, $p = 0.282$). The descriptive pattern supports this structural result. Clarity of follow-up was the lowest-rated complaint-handling indicator, and satisfaction with complaint follow-up was the lowest-rated satisfaction indicator. Citizens may receive an initial response or observe a complaint status, but a satisfactory evaluation requires a clear explanation of what happens next, who is responsible, whether the solution fits the problem, and when resolution can be expected. This interpretation aligns with research emphasizing responsiveness, validation, transparency, and follow-up in Jakarta's complaint management system (Islami et al., 2024; Mashpufah et al., 2024; Masykur et al., 2024).

The nonsignificant direct path does not imply that the complaint system is unimportant. Instead, it shows that process quality must be converted into a satisfactory experience before citizens generalize it into institutional trust. Respondents also differed in the depth of complaint-channel experience: some had directly submitted or monitored reports, while others had only obtained information or knew about the channel. Such variation can weaken a direct trust effect because indirect or informational exposure provides less evidence about actual institutional performance than a completed complaint journey. This result is consistent with Pramuditha et al. (2024) and Nuralmasari (2025), who reported that service quality does not always produce trust directly.

Citizen Satisfaction as the Central Trust-Building Mechanism

Citizen satisfaction is the strongest structural predictor of trust ($\beta = 0.625$; $f^2 = 0.449$). Satisfaction summarizes the citizen's evaluation of the process, outcome, staff, complaint follow-up, and problem resolution, making it a stronger basis for trust than any single service characteristic. When the overall experience is satisfactory, citizens have more credible evidence that district government is capable, fair, transparent, and committed to resolving needs. This result strongly supports Expectation Confirmation Theory and prior evidence identifying satisfaction as an antecedent of citizen trust (Pramuditha et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2025).

The mediation results reveal two different trust-building mechanisms. For administrative services, satisfaction partially mediates the effect: the service encounter itself provides some direct trust signals, but satisfaction magnifies those signals substantially. Citizens can immediately observe whether procedures are clear, staff are competent, information is consistent, and treatment is fair. These visible aspects of the service encounter can already shape an initial judgment about the reliability and integrity of the institution, even before citizens form an overall evaluation of satisfaction. Satisfaction then strengthens this initial judgment by confirming that the service experience met or exceeded expectations.

For complaint handling, satisfaction fully mediates the effect: response speed, transparency, and communication do not independently produce trust unless citizens evaluate the overall complaint experience positively. This suggests that complaint handling follows a different route toward trust. A fast response or transparent status update may show that the

government is attentive, but these signals alone may not be enough to create trust. Citizens still need to see whether the complaint is followed up clearly, whether the proposed solution addresses the problem, and whether the case is resolved with sufficient certainty. Only after these experiences are evaluated positively does complaint handling appear to translate into institutional trust.

The contrast between these two mediation patterns represents an important theoretical contribution of the study. Administrative service encounters can provide immediate institutional signals because citizens directly observe competence, fairness, consistency, and professionalism during the service process. Complaint handling, in contrast, appears to require a more complete evaluative process before trust is formed. In other words, routine administrative services can build trust both directly and through satisfaction, whereas complaint handling strengthens trust mainly after citizens conclude that the overall complaint experience has been satisfactory. This pattern demonstrates why mediation analysis adds explanatory value. A comparable logic is visible in recent management research where a direct antecedent-outcome path becomes meaningful only through an intervening capability or psychological mechanism (Haji, 2026). In the present public-service setting, that mechanism is citizen satisfaction.

The findings also have a managerial implication for performance measurement. Closing a complaint is an operational output; citizen satisfaction is an evaluative outcome; trust is an institutional outcome. Treating these as interchangeable can obscure the process through which public value is created. A district or complaint unit can achieve high case-closure rates while still failing to strengthen trust if follow-up is unclear or solutions are perceived as inadequate. Performance systems should therefore complement completion metrics with citizen-rated clarity, solution adequacy, resolution certainty, and post-resolution satisfaction.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Theoretically, the study extends Expectation Confirmation Theory from a general satisfaction framework to a dual-interface public-service model. Administrative service and digital complaint handling represent different citizen-government encounters, yet both influence trust primarily through the quality of post-experience evaluation. The different mediation patterns show that the form of service matters: a face-to-face or administrative encounter can provide direct evidence of institutional quality, while a complaint process requires successful experiential confirmation before trust is strengthened.

Managerially, district offices should prioritize staff competence and information consistency because interpersonal courtesy is already evaluated relatively favorably. Training should combine regulatory knowledge, cross-service procedures, case simulation, and standardized service explanations. Service requirements, process flows, estimated completion times, official charges, and help contacts should be presented consistently across physical and digital channels.

For complaint management, the priority is not only faster response but a clearer closed-loop process. Each status change should state the responsible unit, action already taken, next step, expected time, reason for reassignment when applicable, and evidence of resolution. Cases that exceed service standards should trigger escalation and automated reminders. A closed case should be followed by a short citizen confirmation or satisfaction assessment. These steps directly address the lowest-rated elements in the data and are consistent with the finding that complaint quality influences trust only after it generates satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that citizen trust in Jakarta district services is shaped more strongly by satisfactory service experience than by service-process quality alone. Administrative service quality significantly increases citizen satisfaction and has a small direct effect on trust. Complaint handling quality significantly increases satisfaction but does not directly increase trust. Citizen satisfaction is the strongest predictor of trust, partially mediating the administrative service quality relationship and fully mediating the complaint handling quality relationship. The model explains 49.7 percent of citizen satisfaction and 56.1 percent of citizen trust, with satisfactory model fit and positive predictive relevance.

The findings suggest a clear practical sequence for public-service improvement. District offices should preserve respectful and fair staff behavior while strengthening competence and information clarity. Complaint managers should focus on follow-up clarity, solution accuracy, and certainty of resolution rather than relying primarily on response or case-closure statistics. Integrating satisfaction measures into administrative and complaint-service performance dashboards would provide a more meaningful indicator of whether operational improvements are being converted into public trust.

The study is limited by convenience sampling, four days of online data collection, cross-sectional self-reported data, unequal respondent distribution across Jakarta areas, and differences in the depth of complaint-channel experience. Future studies should use probability or proportional quota sampling, distinguish direct complainants from information-only users, and combine perception data with objective response time, resolution time, escalation, reopening, and case-closure records. Because the model leaves substantial variance unexplained, future research may also test procedural justice, information quality, perceived transparency, or government reputation as additional predictors of satisfaction and trust.

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