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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE IN DEVELOPING WORLD:
A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN HERAT CITY,
AFGHANISTAN

by

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A THESIS

Submitted to the graduate faculty of The University of Alabama at Birmingham,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Public Administration

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2018

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE IN DEVELOPING WORLD:
A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN HERAT CITY,
AFGHANISTAN

FIROOZ JAHANI

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ABSTRACT

Since the Taliban collapse in 2001, Afghanistan has made progress in providing public services to its citizens. The quantity of public services provided by governmental agencies has increased but whether the quality of these services has increased remains a question. The purpose of this thesis is to study the quality of public services delivered by governmental agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan. A modified Gap Model of Service Quality (SERVQUAL) Scale was used in this study to assess the citizens' perceptions and expectations of public services. A survey was administered to a sample of 2,565 citizens receiving services from 57 governmental agencies, resulting in 2,495 complete questionnaires, for a response rate of 97 percent. The study results indicate significant gaps between citizens' expectations and perceptions in all five dimensions of public service quality in the city. The overall average gap was -2.37, which shows the Afghan government's inability to meet citizens' expectations. The study reveals growing expectations of public service quality in the Herat City, Afghanistan, but perceptions of the reality indicate Herat City is not meeting these expectations, indicating a need to improve the quality of services.

Keywords: SERVQUAL, quality, public, service, service delivery, government agencies

DEDICATION

The thesis is dedicated to all men and women who, as wholeheartedly-dedicated public administrators, have honestly and compassionately spent their lives providing public services to the people in Afghanistan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a post-conflict country, Afghanistan still suffers from the effects of more than three decades of war. Post-conflict nations face a series of unique barriers in reconstructing a sound public administration system that provides effective and efficient services to the public. In fact, public service, as the most influencing factor, plays the role of a bridge between the government and the people and therefore can result in public trust or distrust depending on how service providers can meet public demands (Hupe, Hill, & Buffat, 2016). Civil servants, who are in direct contact with the public, have a crucial role in this regard as the representatives of the government (Hupe, et al., 2016).

Since the Taliban collapse in 2001, Afghanistan has made progress in providing public service to its citizens. For instance, according to Education for All 2015 National Review Report-Afghanistan (2015), in 2001 there were fewer than one million students enrolled in schools, with almost no female school enrollments. In 2012, enrollment dramatically increased from under one million a decade ago to 8.2 million, out of which 39 percent were girls. Between 2001 and 2013, approximately 14,600 schools were established, and 187,000 school teachers were hired in the education sector (Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Afghanistan, 2015). This progress is a considerable achievement for a post-conflict country like Afghanistan.

Education is a public service provided by the Ministry of Education, and it has increased quantitatively over the last several years. It is one example of a public service that

begs the question of whether service recipients are satisfied with that service. Does an increase in the quantity of or access to a public service guarantee the quality of that service? Although the amount of government services affects public expectations, the quantity of public services does not meet these expectations alone. Both the quantity and quality of service can influence public welfare, expectations, and satisfaction. The public needs a certain amount of services with a certain level of quality.

“Weak legislative and policy frameworks, weak functional capacities and operational performance at the national and subnational levels, the absence of a long-term public administration reform vision, and weak capacity and leadership of the IARCSC [Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission]” (Nijat, 2014, p. 46) are the major challenges for Afghanistan to deal with in terms of governance and public service delivery. According to a 2014 World Bank Report about improving public service delivery in Afghanistan, the lack of operations and maintenance budget for infrastructure, administration and service facilities, and weak accountability are the two critical constraints that obstruct public service delivery across education, public health, and agriculture sectors. The situation becomes worse when we include administrative corruption as a challenge in Afghanistan. According to a United Nations Office on Drug and Crime report (2012), half of Afghans paid a bribe to governmental employees for receiving public services. This report also found that US\$ 3.9 billion was spent to bribe civil servants in 2012, which was equal to almost 20 percent of Afghanistan GDP in 2012 (Trading Economics, n.d.). Afghanistan was ranked fourth in the world regarding administrative corruption in the public sector in 2017 (Transparency International, n.d.).

Challenges like administrative corruption have adverse effects on public services. In a post-conflict country, the government's failure to provide satisfactory public services reduces public welfare and may result in public mistrust. To prevent this situation, governments need to manage and improve public services (United Nations, 2010, p. XVI). To do so, Afghanistan needs to know its current standing regarding the quality of the services the government provides to the public. Evaluation of public service quality and measurement of the gaps between what the public expects to receive and what they are provided can give Afghanistan's government a real image and accurate assessment of its performance. Being equipped with this assessment, the government can determine the distance between its current standing regarding service quality and where it would like to be. This is a critical step in public service quality management in a developing country like Afghanistan. By assessing the gap between citizens' expectations and perceptions, this study will equip governmental organizations with an accurate assessment of public service quality in Herat City, Afghanistan.

This thesis aims to measure the quality of public services provided by government agencies in Herat City, as perceived by recipients of these services. A modified Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) will be used to measure citizen's expectations as well as perceptions. The gap between the citizens' expectations and their perceptions indicates the quality of the delivered public services to the citizens in Herat City.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to measure the public's perception and expectation of service delivery by governmental organizations in Herat City, Afghanistan and

measure the gaps between expectation and perception of the quality of services provided by various agencies in Herat City.

Research Questions

The major issue addressed here is service quality in governmental agencies in Herat City. Focusing on five dimensions of service quality from citizens' perspective, the study uses the adopted SERVQUAL model to assess the citizens' perceptions and expectations of service quality in Herat City. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- How do citizens perceive the quality of public service delivered by governmental agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan?
- How do citizens expect the quality of public service delivered by governmental agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan?
- What is the expectation-perception gap in different dimensions of the services delivered by governmental agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan?

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic and gives a general overview of the purpose of the background of the study including the purpose of the study and the research questions. The second chapter presents a brief profile of Afghanistan in order to understand the context in which this study is conducted. It also addresses Afghanistan's dependence on foreign economic assistance, and provides the profile of Herat Province/City, the focus of this research. The theoretical framework is covered in the third chapter with discussions of public service and public service quality and its

importance in public administration. In this chapter, I highlight the concepts of service, service quality, citizens' satisfaction, and the purposes that governments follow through considering public service quality and public satisfaction. Chapter four, *The Gap Model of Service Quality*, presents a brief descriptive of the Gap Model of Service Quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) which is used as an instrument to measure the quality of the service. Also, this chapter briefly reviews some studies in other countries including India, Malaysia, Jamaica, Romania, and Botswana, discusses the theoretical expectations in Afghanistan context, and presents the conceptual framework and the hypotheses of the study. The Research Methodology of the study is discussed in the fifth chapter which describes the research design and research methodology of the study. Empirical results and analysis is covered in the sixth chapter that includes descriptive and inferential statistics that reflect Herat citizens' expectations and perceptions of public service quality. Gap analysis results are also presented in this section. Using the SERVQUAL model, the gap score analysis was done to measure the quality of the services and paired t-test is conducted to test the research hypotheses. The results shows negative gaps in all the five dimensions of service quality including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The average gap across all is negative, meaning that the government agencies in Herat City were not able to meet the citizens' expectations. The final chapter, chapter seven, brings the implication of the study followed by the conclusion. Here I outline the summary of the findings and discuss the results. The major implication of this work and possible recommendations based on the findings is discussed, followed by suggestions for future research on public service quality.

CHAPTER 2

AFGHANISTAN

This research studies the quality of public services delivered by governmental agencies in Afghanistan context. Given the focus on Herat City, Afghanistan, I begin with a profile of the country and then the province/city help readers better understand the context in which this study occurs.

Profile of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a mountainous landlocked country located in south central Asia with a total land area of approximately 647,500 square kilometers (Library of Congress, 2008). Various ethnic groups, including Pashtuns, Hazaras, Tajiks, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Baloch, and Aimak, live in the country. Afghanistan's population was estimated about 29.2 million with an annual population growth of 2.3 percent in 2016-2017 (Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization: [CSO], n.d.). According to the World Bank Indicator database (n.d.), approximately 73 percent of the population lived in rural areas in 2016.

After the Taliban regime, a new institutional structure has been applied in Afghanistan. This institutional structure is an amalgamation of the institutional arrangements that had existed before 2001 and from negotiations at Loya Jirga and Bone Conference in 2002 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2009, p.137). There are 34 provinces, each with one city (the capital city) and a major provincial municipality; these provinces

are further subdivided into 398 rural districts (total districts in the country), with approximately 217 municipalities within these provinces (UNDP, 2009). In addition to the one Afghan national administration, there are provincial administrations and district-level administrations. Provincial governments include “the line departments of the main sectorial ministries, the Provincial Governor’s Office, the elected Provincial Council, and in some provinces, the local offices of other agencies such as the National Security Department, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and the Independent Afghanistan Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC)” (UNDP, 2009, p.137).

The ministries and their provincial departments are responsible for delivering public services in areas such as national defense, public security, public education, public healthcare, public transportation, rural development, and public post services. Provincial councils work as a bridge between the public and the government in Afghanistan. They have oversight and counseling roles to pave the ground for the participation of people and civil society organizations in governance at the provincial level (Nijat, 2014). These councils are responsible for hearing the citizens’ problems and overseeing the provincial administration efforts in, for example, security, education and health sector. These councils also advise the provincial government agencies on the governance affairs (Nijat, 2014). Governments at the district level are the lowest formal administrations which include District Governor’s Office, district offices of central departments –in areas such as education, health, policing, rural development –prosecutors, and primary courts (UNDP, 2009).

Afghanistan’s Dependence on Foreign Economic Assistance

Foreign financial assistance has had a crucial role in Afghanistan's history, particularly after the collapse of Taliban regime in 2001. Afghanistan is hugely dependent on

external aid. On average, 68 percent of the country's annual budgets in years 2015, 2016, and 2017 came from foreign donations (Afghanistan Ministry of Finance: National Budgets, 2015-2017). Since 2001, several international conferences, such as Bonn conference (2001), Tokyo Conference (2002), Berlin Conference (2004), London Conference (2006), Paris Conference (2008), Tokyo Conference (2012), and Brussels Conference (2016) have been held about Afghanistan to support the country and through which billions of dollars have been provided to Afghanistan (Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, n.d.).

Despite millions of dollars from foreign aid spent on capacity-building and the government's commitment to promote good governance, corruption is a widespread and growing challenge in Afghanistan. According to Transparency International (2018), Afghanistan was the 4th most corrupt country among 180 countries in 2017 and has been among the most corrupt over the last decade. According to a survey entitled "Afghanistan in 2017: A Survey of the Afghan People" conducted by The Asia Foundation (2017), the majority of Afghan people believed that corruption is a problem in all aspects of their lives. Although no research has been carried out to study the relationship between corruption and public service delivery in Afghanistan, corruption may negatively affect the quality of public service delivery in the country. However, efficient public service delivery can have a vital role in improving the daily life of people in Afghanistan, as one of the least developed countries in the world.

Profile of Herat Province



Figure 2. 1. Afghanistan Map by Province (Retrieved March 28, 2018, from http://afghanistanhistory.wikia.com/wiki/File:Afghanistan_province_color_map.gif)

Located in western part of the country, Herat province, with a 2017 population of 1,928,327, is the second largest province by population (CSO, n.d.). The province has 15 districts¹ and more than 1,000 villages. Approximately 71 percent of the population lives in rural areas, with the rest in urban areas (CSO, n.d.). Herat City, as the third largest city by population in the country, is the capital of Herat province. All the provincial and district-level government agencies in Herat province are linked to the government agencies in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, and

¹ In 2017, Shindand District was formally divided into five separate districts, so the number of districts in this province is 19

are responsive to administrators in the capital. Like the other 33 provinces, the patronage system is the approach to appoint the public administrators to high managerial government posts in this province.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is a developing country still dealing with the aftermath of decades of conflict. As well, the country has received a substantial amount of foreign aid. The result of a four-decade conflict and ensuing international support is a unique institutional structure that is heavily dependent on foreign economic assistance. Understanding the country and the province helps develop the theoretical expectations and set the hypotheses in Afghanistan context. Next chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Government agencies are required by law to provide citizens with public services. High quality public service delivery can increase the citizens' satisfaction through meeting their expectations. Public service delivery has a key role in building the citizens trust toward government and can result in public trust or distrust depending on how government agencies can meet public expectations and needs (Hupe, Hill, & Buffat, 2016). This chapter covers the theoretical framework of the research study. By discussing the concepts of service, service quality, and citizens' satisfaction. It also covers the motivation of governments to follow through with improving public service quality and citizens' satisfaction.

Service and Service Quality

Public services are those services that are delivered by the government either directly or indirectly (Mcgregor, 1983). Public services can be significantly different from private-sector services. Today, the idea that public organizations should be managed the same way as a private organization is gradually fading. Thus, the recognition and understanding of the differences between public service and private-sector service can have a crucial role in the improvement of today's public service delivery. Peter C. Humphreys (1998) explained some common differences between these two types of services.

First, as the author highlights, the primary purpose of public services is not financial profits. Thus, they are either free or at prices lower than market prices. When public services are provided public service users are not required to immediately pay for the services before the delivery of the services. In many cases, they are not required to pay directly. Second, Humphreys stated that in contrast to the service delivery in the private sector, many features of competition are absent from public service delivery. He explained that service providers in the private sector try to attract the customers away from the competing service providers in the market while this feature is not seen in the public sector because public services are mostly monopolistic.

Third, as the government is collecting taxes and is responsible for law enforcement, law requires public agencies to deliver public services to the citizens (Humphreys, 1998). In other words, public services are mandatory while it is not the case for the services that are provided in private sector. Fourth, the influencing factors on decision-making about public service delivery are different (Humphreys, 1998). Humphreys noted that principles such as fairness and equity guide most of the decisions on public service delivery. Also, he discussed that resources are allocated to different public services, such as public health and public transport, based on the public needs. In contrast to the public sector, equity and fairness are not the guiding principles of service delivery in private sector because the primary purpose of organizations in private industry is to gain profit rather than to provide services to economically disadvantaged individuals or families.

Fifth, the relationship between service users and service providers in public and private sectors are significantly different, according to Humphreys. In private sector organizations, the relationship between service users and service providers is direct, as displayed

in Figure 3.1. According to the author, when the service in private sector meets the customers' satisfaction regarding price and quality, the customers demand the service and the service provider supplies it. Customers make the payment directly and, in exchange, receive the services directly from the providers that receive the money; thus the relationship is straightforward, and customer control is simpler (Humphreys 1998).

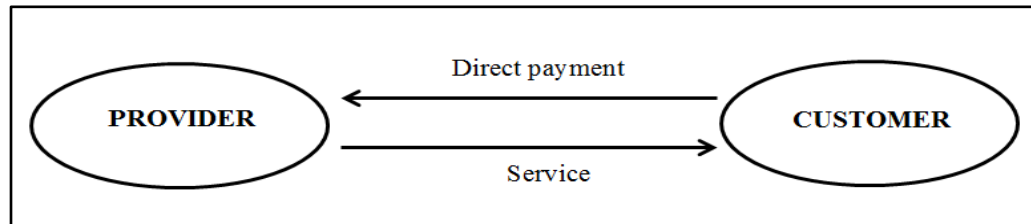


Figure 3. 1. Provider-Consumer Relationship in Private Sector (Humphreys, 1998)

In public sector, Humphreys notes that the relationship between the service users and service provider is indirect (Figure 3.2). Service users do not make the payment directly to the service provider; thus the control of this indirect relationship is harder.

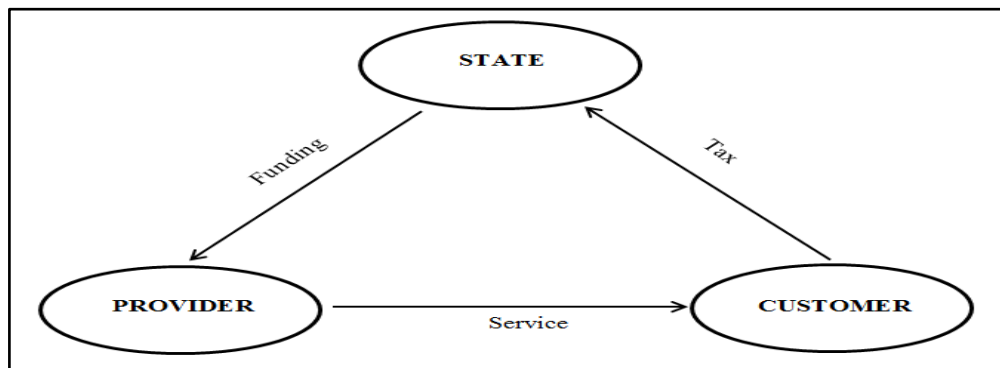


Figure 3. 2. Provider-Consumer Relationship in Public Sector (Humphreys, 1998)

This indirectness complicates the relationship. In private sector, the service providers know how much is paid by customers and can estimate their level of expectation because of direct payment, but in public sector, the entity that receives the money and the organization that provides the money are not the same therefore, the service providers may

not know the service users' expectations. On the other hand, service users pay their taxes and have their expectations from government agencies, but they do not have any ideas of how much financial fund those government agencies are receiving.

Nick Thijs (2008) pointed out two other key differences. Besides considering their individual demands, people need the public sector to provide high quality and efficient services for all community members while individual needs are the core concern in private sector customers. Second, dissimilar to most of the private service providers, which prefer to concentrate on the more affluent customers, the public sector must provide service to the whole population, particularly those who are rarely interested in private sector services (Thijs, 2008). Although differences are not limited to the aspects as mentioned earlier, they can be considered as core differences in private and public service provision.

Service quality measurement equips the public service providers to not only understand the thoughts citizens have about their service delivery but also the quality of the services they deliver. Through learning about how the citizens evaluate service delivery, service providers can recognize how satisfied the citizens are with the service provided to them. It is worthy to mention that service quality measurement is very different and more complicated than the measurement of quality of goods. In their book entitled Service Marketing Management, Peter Mudie and Angela Pirrie (2006) explained that services are distinguished from goods through their four characteristics including tangibility, inseparability, variability or heterogeneity and perishability.

According to the authors, dissimilar to goods, customers cannot see, touch, feel, or taste services before purchasing them. This feature indicates intangibility as a characteristic

of services. In addition, goods and services are different in their lifecycles. A good's lifecycle includes production, sale, storage, and consumption. In other words, goods are first produced and then can be consumed with a delay. In contrast, services are first ordered/purchased and then they are produced. Also, services are produced and consumed simultaneously. The authors discussed that these aspects illustrate inseparability, as the characteristic of services, meaning that service production and service consumption are inseparable. Variability as a characteristic of a service means that the quality of a service may vary from a service provider to another service provider. In fact, how the service is provided and when the service is provided depends on who offers the service. Perishability, as the last characteristic of a service, means that services are not storable. The author noted that unlike goods, which can be saved for later sale or consumption, services cannot be stored. Compared to goods, it is challenging to assess the quality of services which are intangible, inseparable, variable, and perishable (Mudie & Pirrie, 2006).

Potential users also consider quality when deciding to purchase or receive services. Ghylis, et al. (2008) discussed that having a definition of service quality enables service providers to provide service users with higher quality services, resulting at a higher level of their satisfaction. Although there are several different definitions of quality in different research works, it is impossible to find a globally accepted definition (Hardie & Walsh, 1993; Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). Some definitions of quality are as follow:

- Quality is defined as “anything which can be improved” (Imai, 1986).
- Quality is also defined as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.” (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2005, p. 472).

- Quality is also defined as “the summation of the effective evaluations by each customer of each attitude object that creates customer satisfaction” by Wicks and Roethlein (2009, p. 90).
- Gitlow *et al.* (1989) defined quality as “the extent to which the customers or users believe the product or service surpasses their needs and expectations” (p. 3). Kotler *et al.*, (2005), supported this definition, explaining that users’ expectations are considered as the center of quality concept in this definition. Kotler *et al.*, (2005) discussed that when a product/service quality is high that delivered outputs meet or exceed the service user’s needs and expectations (Kotler *et al.*, 2005, p. 472)

For the purposes of this study, I need to have a more accurate definition of service quality to measure the quality of public service in Afghanistan. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) defined service quality as the service provider’s ability and capacity to meet or exceed the service users’ expectations through measuring the gap between service users’ expectations of the service and perceptions of the service. This definition is the core definition of service quality in this study and the research purpose and hypotheses have been determined based on it. In their study, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) highlighted three levels of service quality. Good service quality satisfies citizens’ expectations (citizens’ expectations=citizens’ perceptions); poor service quality fails to satisfy the citizens’ expectations (citizens’ expectations> citizens’ perceptions) and finally, excellent service quality excels their expectations (citizens’ expectations< citizens’ perceptions) (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

In his study, Nick Johns (1998) pointed out the dichotomies between services providers’ and service users’ views of “service”. In other words, service providers and service

users see services from two different views. Service providers have a process-based view of the service through which they see services as a process that includes components of core delivery, performance, and operation. Service users, with different core needs and emotions, see services as an experience of life. Their needs and choices do influence their perception and experience of service. The author pointed out that despite the dichotomies between these two different views, service quality and value are two common elements between them.

Edvardsson (1998) also believed that the service users' perspective must be the core in approaching the concept of service. He discussed that service users' perception of service quality is the outcome of a process through which services are produced as outputs. The author explained that since the service and service users' experience and perception of service are generated from the same process, the participation of the service users in the process of service production and delivery will add values to the services and raise the quality of service delivery. In this study, the user-based definition of service quality is used. Ghylis et al., (2008) supported this definition as the most proper perspective to measure the quality dimensions. In the current research study, service quality is defined as the difference between citizens' expectation of public service quality prior the actual delivery of the service and their perception of public service quality when they receive the services. Expectations are considered as desires of service consumers and what these consumers feel a service organization *should* provide rather than *would* provide to them (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Perceptions are what consumers actually receive from service providers (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Assessing the quality of services becomes much difficult if customers' perspectives are considered in the measurement. Considering consumers' expectations and perception (*service quality*), which is affected by the capacity of a service provider to fulfill its consumers' expectations, can be considered as *consumers' general judgment* on the services they receive from a service provider (Ramseook-Munhurrun, Lukea-Bhiwajee, & Naidoo, 2010). This judgment certainly comes to consumers' minds when they receive services either from a public sector organization or a from private sector organization. It is worth to mention that assessment of service quality does include not only the end results but also the delivery process through which the service is delivered to the service users and its efficacy on service users' perceptions (Douglas & Connor, 2003).

Citizen Satisfaction and its complexity

Why should government agencies care about the public satisfaction and public service quality?

In the private sector, service providers measure the quality of their services to identify how satisfied their customers are with the quality of the services they receive. Service providers' competitiveness in the market is strongly affected by their customers' expectation and satisfaction. More satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal to the service providers, and more loyal customers are more financially profitable ones (Morgeson, 2014). In other words, customers' satisfaction levels either guarantee or challenge the service companies' existence in the market. That is the reason managing customer satisfaction is a primary goal for almost all private sector organizations, and it is usually reflected in their visions, missions, and core values.

In the public sector, this concern becomes more crucial as “the fundamental *raison d’être* of government is the delivery of services to its people” (United Nations, 2010, p. xvi) and public service delivery is essential to all aspects of life including the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects in all countries (United Nations, 2010). Therefore, public welfare and different aspects of people’s lives can be affected by public services.

Public service provision can be done either directly through the public sector, including the government agencies, or indirectly through financing the service provision. No matter the public services are delivered directly by a government agency or through the third party, the citizens are the target group, and their perspectives should be considered in the service provision. The government agencies should know how happy their target groups (citizens) are with the services they are provided. To manage the citizens’ expectations and satisfaction, a government agency can measure the quality of services they provide to the citizens to understand what the citizens think about the organization and the quality of delivered services. Although public service quality measurement does not represent the citizens’ satisfaction, it is a factor that affects the citizens’ satisfaction. There are many organizational and societal purposes that government agencies, in a democratic society, try to follow through service quality measurement and citizen satisfaction measurement.

In his book, *Citizen Satisfaction: Improving Government Performance, Efficiency, and Citizen Trust*, Forrest V. Morgeson III (2014) highlighted seven purposes that make government agencies consider the citizens’ satisfaction and assess the quality of public services they are delivering to improve their performance. The first purpose is to ***build government-citizen feedback loops and new networks of communication*** that connects governments to their citizens (Morgeson III, 2014). He explained that this communication

network enables government agencies to be in touch with their citizens, identify whether their citizens are satisfied or dissatisfied with the service they are provided, and recognize the sources of the current dissatisfaction with the organizations. The second purpose is to ***increase their transparency and accountability*** (Morgeson III, 2014). He discussed that transparency, as a principle of democratic society, requires government agencies inform the citizens of their organizational and internal processes, decisions, actions, and performance. The author further explained that accountability, as another principle of a democratic society, makes the government agencies more answerable to how and what they decide, what they do, and how they perform. The measurement of public service quality and the citizen satisfaction gives the governmental organizations the information from citizens' perspective on how government performs.

The third purpose is to ***develop the citizen-toward-government trust*** (Morgeson III, 2014). The author explained that citizen toward government trust is a vital factor in a democratic society. "A society that fosters robust relations of trust is probably also a society that can afford fewer regulations and greater freedoms, deal with more contingencies, tap the energy and ingenuity of its citizens, [and] limit the inefficiencies of rule-based coordination." (Morgeson III, 2014, p 40). According to the author, the level of citizen-to-government satisfaction, as an indicating factor, can show the level of citizens' trust or distrust in government. Less satisfied citizens tend to have a lower level of trust in government and more satisfied citizens tend to build a greater level of citizen-toward-government trust (Morgeson, 2014).

The fourth purpose is to ***improve the quality of public service***. Measurement of quality of public services from citizens' perspective enables government agencies to recognize

which aspects of their services are poor and which aspects of them are strong, according to the author. Therefore, this information empowers the government agencies to enhance the aspects of their services and performance about which citizens care (Morgeson III, 2014). The fifth purpose is to do **benchmarking**, which is a process through which a government agency can compare its service or performance with another organization, either a public agency or private one, to identify how it doing its job compared to the other organization and to recognize the rooms for service or performance improvement and reform their policies in a way that can better satisfy the citizens (Morgeson III, 2014). He further explained that governmental agencies use the collected data to do the performance benchmarking from a citizen perspective and therefore, achieve a higher level of organizational improvement.

The sixth purpose is **efficient budgetary and resource allocation** (Morgeson III, 2014). He discusses that once a governmental agency learns which aspects of its performance are poor or strong, which aspects of its performance still have room to improve (through benchmarking), and which aspects of its performance are more important for citizens, they can efficiently allocate its resources to the areas that their improvement is vital for the agency and prevent their resources from being wasted in unimportant areas. The last but not least purpose is to **monitor and motivate public employees** (Morgeson III, 2014). Usually, the regular staff of government organizations do not have sufficient information about what citizens think about them and the work they do for the public, and they may think that that the citizens have a negative view of them, their agencies, and their work (Morgeson III, 2014). The author discussed that knowing how satisfied the citizens are about the organization enables staff to have enough information and therefore learn what

the citizen think about them, their agencies, and their work. Also, through this information, managers can motivate their staff by showing them that they are doing a good job and that the public appreciates their fruitful efforts. They also can monitor their staff through learning of the staff's performance achievement and shortcomings (Morgeson III, 2014). To achieve the purposes mentioned earlier, government agencies must include citizen satisfaction measurement in their performance measurement and utilize the collected information to manage citizens' satisfaction. Although service quality is not equal to customers' satisfaction, it is one of the key factors that significantly influence citizens' satisfaction and higher quality public services causes the citizens to be more satisfied with the quality of public service delivery.

Managing public satisfaction and public service quality is complicated because people have different roles when they deal with public sector organizations. According to Henry Mintzberg (1996), the relationship between government and people is complicated because the public can have a relationship with the government as customers, subjects, clients, and citizens. To manage their relationship with service users in a more efficient way, government agencies should consider all types of the relationships they have. They should consider this fact that sometimes people are the government's customers and in some cases, they are government's subjects. People should also be served as clients and sometimes as citizens. Mintzberg (1996, p. 77) believed that "I am not a mere customer of my government, thank you. I expect something more than arm's-length trading and something less than the encouragement to consume." According to the author, as subjects, people have obligations to follow, and everybody who is obligated to follow law or pay tax is under this group. As customers, he explained that people conduct direct deals with the

government. When people purchase lottery tickets or use a government telephone directory, indeed, they are dealing with the government as customers (Mintzberg, 1996). As clients, the author noted that people receive professional services such as healthcare and education. He highlights that unlike subjects, who have obligations, citizens have rights. Citizens have the right to be served by museums, courts, embassies, highways and road departments, fiscal and monetary policies. In other words, as citizens, people receive social, economic, cultural, physical, and political infrastructures (Mintzberg, 1996). National defense, public security, public education, public healthcare, public transportation, public post services and judiciary services are examples of public services.

Almost everybody, no matter what roles they have, is in touch with government agencies every day. Is the public really satisfied with the public services they are provided? The answer to this question is not that easy because, according to Nick Thijs (2008) customers' satisfaction regarding the services they receive are strongly affected by their expectations (2008). The expectations themselves are strongly influenced by the complexity of the relationship between the government and its people. To answer the question mentioned above, the quality of services provided by the public sector should be assessed through measurement models. To move toward its real future goals, each government organization needs to know where it is standing now.

Measurement of service quality informs the governments of their current standing through highlighting their weaknesses and strengths in service provision. Understanding their weak and strong points, governments can develop policies and long-term plans to enhance the quality of services they provide for the public. Whatever we call the public – citizens, clients, customers, or subjects – there is no doubt that putting the public in the

core of government agencies' attention and interacting with them based on a service user-centered vision is necessary for governments and can play a strongly effective and efficient role to influence the public's satisfaction level. Indeed, democratic Citizenship is a root of new public management through which the cooperation and communication increase between the public officials and the citizens and through which the official learn that they achieve more common goals by "listening" to the citizens instead of "telling", and by "serving" the citizens instead of "steering" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007). Improvement in public services, delivered by governmental agencies, can have an impact on the public's perceptions of the agencies' trustworthiness and performance (Guerrero, 2011).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, some key concepts including public service, service quality, and citizens' satisfaction were discussed. Public service is distinct from private service, and public service quality is more complex than that of private service. Public service quality is not equal to citizens' satisfaction, but it is a key influencing factor that affects their satisfaction. This study defines the quality of public services as the difference between the citizens' expectations and perceptions and use this definition as the foundation to measure the quality of public services delivered by government agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan. Features such as intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability make it very complicated to measure the quality of services compared to goods. Understanding these concepts paves the way for discussion on the public service quality measurement model which will be covered by Chapter IV.

CHAPTER 4

THE GAP MODEL OF SERVICE QUALITY

The Gap Model of Service Quality was used in this study to measure the quality of public services delivered by government agencies in Herat City Afghanistan. The model measures the quality of services through measuring the service user's expectations and perceptions of the service. This chapter presents a brief concept of the Gap Model of Service Quality, the theoretical expectations in Afghanistan, the research hypotheses, and the conceptual framework of the study. Also, this chapter briefly reviews some studies in some other countries including India, Malaysia, Botswana, Jamaica, and Romania. The chapter helps the reader to better understand the analytical part of the study in the next chapters.

The SERVQUAL Model

As the Gap Model of Service Quality –the SERVQUAL Model – makes the foundation for this study, the primary purpose of this chapter is to present a brief explanation of the model, which is used as a measurement tool to assess the quality of the services delivered by the service providers both in private or public sectors.

The term SERVQUAL is derived from the two following words “Service” and “Quality” and refers to a quantitative model to measure the quality of a service provided by an organization. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed this model through conducting interviews with both the service providers and the customers. Four service businesses were selected, and fourteen executives and twelve customer focus

groups were interviewed, resulting in the awareness of five gaps (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Figure 4.1 displays the Gap Model of Service Quality.

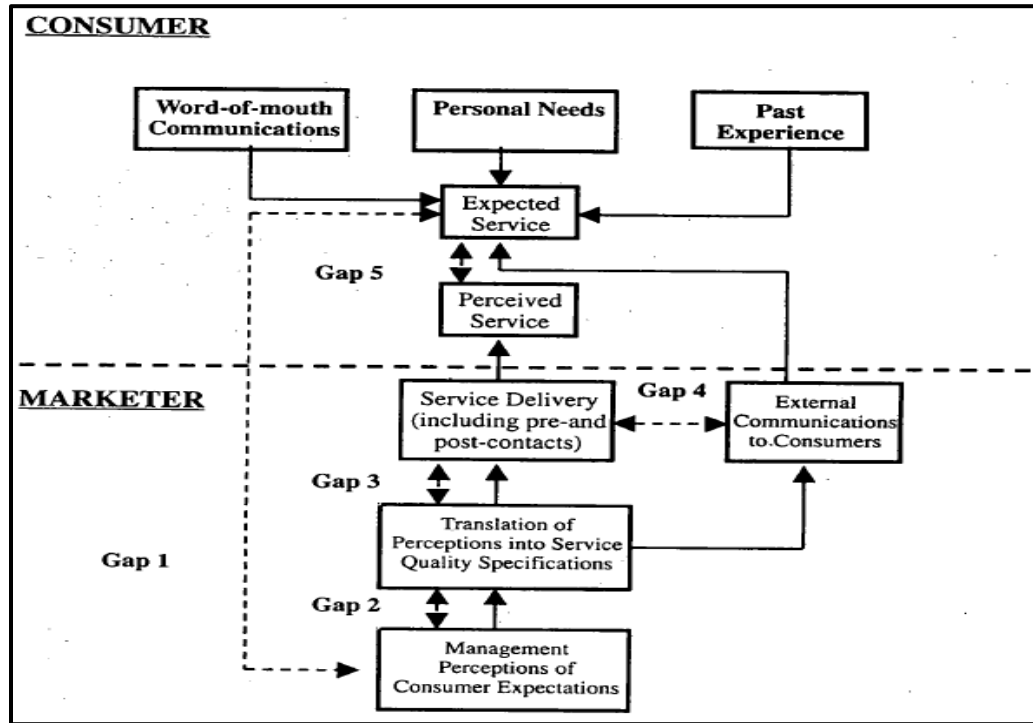


Figure 4. 1. The Gap Model of Service Quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985.)

According to Parasuraman et al., 1985, the first four gaps were identified through interviews with the businesses. Gap 1 is identified as the *customer expectations & management perceptions gap* (Parasuraman et al., 1985). As the authors explained, this gap is measured to answer the question "Do the service providers know what the service users exactly need regarding the quality of the services?" The authors noted that the gap indicates what the right service is from the customers' perspectives and what the specifications of a high-quality service are. Gap 2, which is identified as *management perceptions & service-quality specification gap*, is, indeed, the reflection of the customers' expectations into a service business's processes (Parasuraman et al., 1985). As the author discussed, the purpose is to make sure that service providers can transfer the management definition of the

customers' expectations into their service standards and specification, and therefore deliver the right services.

Gap 3 is known as *service-quality specifications and service delivery gap* (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The author explained that gap 3 is measured to assure that a service providers' employees are competent in providing the needed services. In other words, the size of the gaps shows how competent the employees are in transferring the defined service standards and specifications into the service delivery processes. All communication channels, including media advertisement, can strongly affect costumers' expectations which may result in Gap 4, identified as *service delivery and external communication gap*, the fourth and the last gap from the service provider's side (Parasuraman et al., 1985). As the authors noted, the purpose here is to measure how much the right expectations are conveyed to the service users. In other words, this gap shows the difference between what the service providers advertise about their services and what they actually deliver. Service providers should let their customers know what they can realistically provide.

Gap 5 is addressed from a different perspective. *Expected services and perceived services gap* was determined through interviews with the customer-focused groups (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The authors highlight this gap as an accumulation of the first four gaps that reflects the difference between what users *expect* to receive and what they *actually* receive. Indeed, as the most important gap, this gap indicates perceived service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985). If service providers intend to close or reduce the gap between their performance and customers' expectations, they need to measure this gap and invest in its reduction. This gap is the focus of the current research work.

According to Becser, 2007, the SERVQUAL initial model was first developed with ten dimensions in service quality which included courtesy, responsiveness, credibility, access, tangibles, reliability, competence, security, communication, and understanding the customer. The model also included 97 statement pairs to measure the customers' expectations and perceptions. After testing the validity and reliability of the model, these 97 statement pairs were reduced to 22, representing five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Becser, 2007).

The first dimension, tangibles, is used to evaluate equipment, tools, and employees' appearance, in an organization (Becser, 2007) and includes the following statements:

1. The organization has a modern looking equipment to deliver the service.
2. The organization's physical facilities are visually appealing.
3. The organization's employees are neat in their appearance.
4. The organization's materials associated with the service are visually appealing.

The second dimension, the reliability, evaluates the service provider's capability to deliver the services they promised to the service users (Becser, 2007). These include:

5. When the organization promises to do something, it does so.
6. When you have a problem, the organization shows a sincere interest in solving it.
7. The organization performs the service right the first time.
8. The organization provides the service at the time it promises to do so.
9. The organization insist on error free records.

Responsiveness, the third dimension, is used to assess the organization's ability to assist the users with what they need quickly and responsively (Becser, 2007), and includes:

10. Employees give prompt service to you.
11. Employees are always willing to help you.
12. Employees are never too busy to respond to your request.
13. Employees tell you exactly when services will be performed

Assurance, as the fourth dimension, equips the questionnaire with to evaluate how respectful, trustworthy, skillful, and inspirational the employees are (Becser, 2007). These include:

14. The behavior of employees instills confidence in you.
15. You feel safe in dealing with this governmental organization.
16. Employees are consistently courteous and friendly with you.
17. Employees have the knowledge and skills to answer your questions.

The last dimension, empathy, indicates how customer-centered the employees are (Becser, 2007). These include:

18. The organization gives you individual attention.
19. The organization has operating hours convenient to all its service users
20. The organization has employees who care about your values, ideas, and feelings.
21. The organization has your best interest at heart.
22. The employees understand your specific needs.

The instrument includes similar 22 statements to measure the service users' expectation. (See Appendix – 1: Coding for the adopted instrument used in this study). Considering all the mentioned dimensions, if we compare what the citizens expect to be provided with what they receive, indeed, we measure the quality of service. It can be inferred from

the SERVQUAL instrument that the comparison can result in three levels of service quality including good service quality, poor service quality, and high service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Instrument Validity

Validity of a research instrument means that it measures what it is supposed to measure (Eller, Gerber, & Robinson, 2013). The SERVQUAL has been used in several previous research studies to measure the quality of services either in public or private sector. The broad use of the instrument strengthens its validity as a useful tool for measuring service quality. Also, in his study entitled "A review of twenty years of SERVQUAL research" Riadh Ladhari (2009) studied thirty popular applications of SERVQUAL and concluded that that SERVQUAL model has been successfully applied to measure the quality of various types of service and remains a useful tool for measurement of service quality. Besides, François A. Carrillat, Fernando Jaramillo, and Jay P. Mulki (2007) studied the validity of the SERVQUAL through data from 17 studies too. The study found that adaptation of the SERVQUAL model to the measurement context enhances its validity.

The SERVQUAL Model Used In Other Countries

The SERVQUAL model, as a multiple-item measurement tool, has been employed in a large number of research studies to measure the quality of services delivered to service users by public or private organizations such as schools, universities, libraries, hospitals, banks, restaurants, hotels, stores, municipalities, post offices, police departments, and

courts (Purcarea et al., 2013; Ilhaamie, 2010; Pansiri & Mmereki, 2010; Reddy et al., 2016; & Bourne, 2016).

Mukhtar, Saeed, and Ata (2013) highlight some SERVQUAL's advantages. The most important advantage of SERVQUAL is that many service providers have used it worldwide and therefore, it is known as a tested measurement instrument. Moreover, organizations can conduct periodic SERVQUAL-based studies to track the levels of customers' expectations and perceptions. Finally, the gaps determined by this model assist the service providers to prioritize their strengths and weaknesses in their strategic plans (Mukhtar et al., 2013). For the mentioned advantages, the SERVQUAL model is a well-known worldwide model to assess service quality in service organizations (Mukhtar et al., 2013).

Purcarea, Gheorghe, and Petrescu (2013) conducted research to assess the quality of public health care in Romania using the SERVQUAL model. Respondents were selected from a health care forum. The study found negative gaps in all the five dimensions of service quality, with the biggest in the dimension of tangibles. The next largest gaps in the study were in the dimensions of responsiveness and reliability dimensions. To close the gaps, the authors suggested that managers should concentrate on equipment, technology, employees' appearance (tangibles dimension), and staff recruitment and training (responsiveness and reliability) (Purcarea et al., 2013).

Another study was done to evaluate the quality of public service in Malaysia. In this study, the sample included clients of 300 public service providers (Ilhaamie, 2010). Although the quality of the delivered public services was evaluated as generally good, there were small negative gaps in all the dimensions of service quality. The study found the

tangibles dimension as the most important dimension for clients, followed by reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The most significant gap was highlighted in the reliability dimension, which is the second most important factor from the citizens' perspectives. The research suggested that the public service providers in Malaysia should invest in the dimensions of tangible, reliability, and responsiveness which can result in higher public service quality and, thus, higher public trust (Ilhaamie, 2010).

Pansiri and Mmereki (2010) used the SERVQUAL model to evaluate the impact of public service reform, known as Work Improvement Teams (WIT), in the health sector through service quality assessment. The authors used this model to assess the quality of services provided by 151 hospitals and clinics in Gaborone, Botswana. The study found that there is a significant gap between what consumers expect and their perceptions of what they received from public health service providers in all the five dimensions of service quality. The largest gap was reflected in the assurance dimension followed by reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. Also, compared to the other dimensions, assurance included the highest expectation level from consumers. Although the implementing WIT reform was costly, its implementation failed in the public health sector in Botswana. The significant gaps prove this failure and indicate that WIT has not enhanced service quality in this sector in Botswana, as argued by the authors. The authors stated that future reforms might result in similarly large gaps and therefore potentially fail if they are implemented in the same way (Pansiri & Mmereki, 2010).

Reddy, BTech and Reddy (2016) used SERVQUAL to assess the quality of police services provided in Karnataka State, India. Their findings indicate that the police service

quality is perceived as adequate in Karnataka State. They also found that the citizens' perceptions exceed their expectations in the tangibles dimension, which includes physical facilities, personnel's appearance, etc. There are negative gaps in the other four dimensions, although these gaps are not very high. The perceived quality of services provided by Karnataka police is an overall public perception of most of the public service providers, as argued by the authors. The findings of the study suggest that the implementation of the Police IT project, standard operation procedures, training for all ranks, provision of prompt services, the establishment of Police Research Unit, and easy access to high-rank officers may reduce the existing gaps (Reddy et al., 2016).

In another study, Paul Andrew Bourne (2016) used the SERVQUAL model to assess the quality of services provided by Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), a paramilitary unit which searches for crimes in Jamaica. The study found gaps in all dimensions. The biggest gap was highlighted in the reliability dimension followed by responsiveness and empathy. The study concluded JCF as a failed unit to meet Jamaicans' expectations (Bourne, 2016).

Theoretical Expectations of Citizen Expectation-Perceptions Gap in Afghanistan

Although public welfare and public trust is important from every government's perspective, no research has been done to evaluate the gap between the public's expectation and its perception of service quality in Afghanistan. Generally, there may be two explanations about the citizens' perception and expectation of public service quality in Afghanistan.

The first explanation is that the results of public service quality assessment in Afghanistan may follow the results from other countries. In other countries, previous work showed that respondents' expectations were higher than their perceptions of public service quality, resulting in negative gaps (Purcarea et al., 2013; Ilhaamie, 2010; Pansiri & Mmereki, 2010; Reddy et al., 2016; & Bourne, 2016). Following the trend in other countries, the citizens' expectations of public service quality in Afghanistan may be higher than their perception and therefore resulting in negative gaps in public service quality in Afghanistan. However, the magnitude of those gaps in Afghanistan may be different (larger or smaller) from those of other countries.

The second explanation is that the corruption in Afghanistan may affect the citizens' perspective. Afghanistan has been among the most corrupted countries over the last 15 years. The corruption may cause the citizens in Afghanistan to have lower expectations of public service quality from the corrupted government. Therefore, when they receive the public services from government agencies, the quality of public service they perceive they received may be equal or even lower than the quality of public services they have thought they would (expectations), resulting in no gaps or positive gaps.

In this study, the hypotheses have been formed based on the first explanation, indicating that the result of public service quality assessment in Afghanistan follows those of other countries, and thus, it has been assumed that negative gaps exist in all dimensions of public service quality in Herat City, Afghanistan. Considering this line of thinking and using SERVEQUAL, this study will measure the government organizations' performance regarding the quality of services they provide for citizens in Afghanistan.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 4.2 illustrates the conceptual framework of this research study. Dimensions of SERVQUAL model are considered as independent variables. The quality of public services, which is the gap between citizens' expectations and perceptions, is the dependent variable of the research.

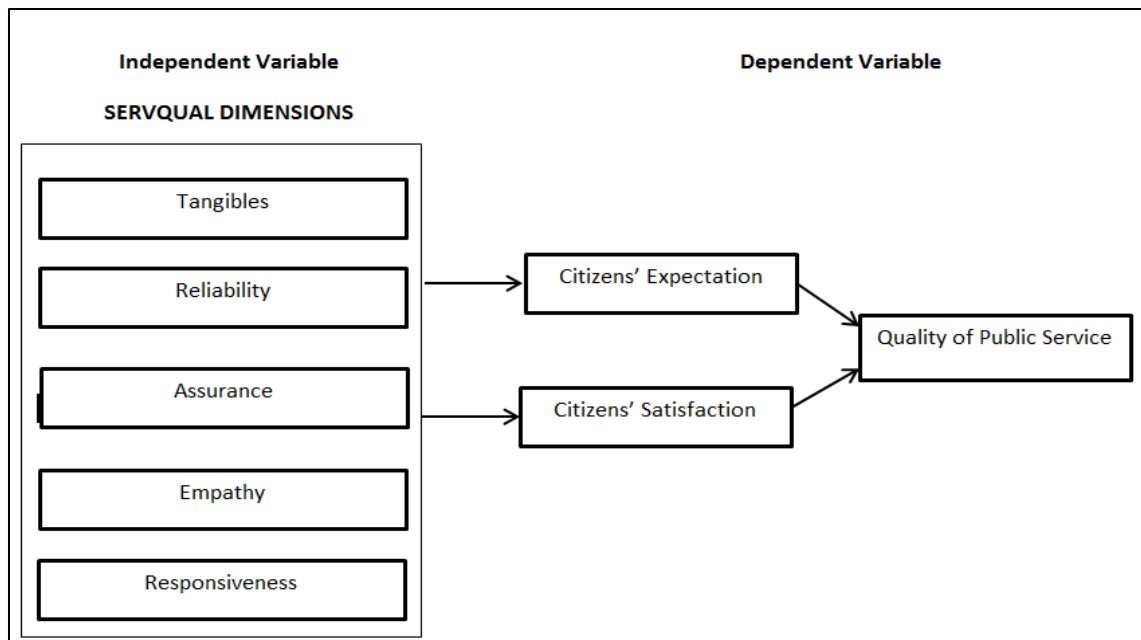


Figure 4. 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the Gap Model of Service Quality and the individual dimensions of the model were briefly explained. Two explanations presented regarding the theoretical expectations in Afghanistan context. The first explanation was that Afghanistan follows the trend in other countries which is a negative citizens' expectation-perception gap, and the second explanation was that the corruption decreases the citizen's expectation, resulting in a positive gap in public service quality. The findings of the studies on public

service quality in India, Malaysia, Romania, Jamaica, and Botswana showed negative gaps in public service quality in these countries. The hypotheses in this study were set based on the first explanation, expecting to see a negative gap in public service quality in Herat City, Afghanistan. The following chapter focus on research methodology and research design.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the public's perception and expectation of service delivery by government agencies in Herat City. Also, this study seeks to measure the expectation-perception gaps and prioritize the dimensions of quality of services delivered by governmental organizations in Herat City. This chapter describes the research design and research methodology of the current research work.

Research Design

This survey-based research project was conducted to measure the quality of public services delivered by governmental agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan. The choice of this research project was supported by governmental agencies' need to measure public service quality and to identify the citizens' expectations and perceptions of public services in Herat City, Afghanistan.

Data Collection Instrument

An adopted SERVQUAL model is used in this study to measure the quality of the services provided by governmental organizations in Herat City, a city in western zone of Afghanistan. The SERVQUAL instrument had three parts. The first part of the survey collected some information about respondents' demography profile such as gender, marital

status, age, education, and occupation. The second part had statement pairs to assess the citizens' expectations and perceptions based on five dimensions. In the original SERVQUAL, this part includes 22 statement pairs to assess the citizens' expectations and perceptions but the current study used an adopted SERVQUAL instrument that included 25 statement pairs to assess the citizens' expectations and perceptions based on five dimensions, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Considering the rules and regulations in Afghanistan, the statement "*The organization has operating hours convenient to you as a citizen*" was removed from the original instrument. This statement was not applicable to government agencies in Herat City as all these agencies have to follow formal operating hours set by national administration in Afghanistan.

Considering the situation, culture, and some existing issues in government organization, the following four items were added to the instrument.

- Employees tell you exactly what services will be performed (clear and measurable promises).
- Employees provide you with clear and understandable information to respond to your requests.
- Employees are committed and responsiveness to follow up your complaints.
- The organization tries its best to prevent the loss of your rights.

Generally, in the second part of the instrument, each statement was evaluated through a seven-point Likert Scale. The first 25 statements measured the citizens' perception of public services from the government organization they just went to but the second 25 statements measured the citizens' expectations of an ideal government organization (not

the organization they just went to). The gap was measured as the difference between expectations and perceptions of service quality ($\text{Gap} = \text{Expectations} - \text{Perceptions}$). In the last part of the instrument, which was named "*Importance of Dimensions*", the respondents scored the importance of each of dimension among five dimensions through the allocation of 100 points among all five dimensions. The purpose of scoring the dimension was to know how important each dimension of the public services is to the citizens. For future information about the instrument, see appendix 3.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

The population for this study included all citizens of Herat city who receive public services from 57 government agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan. Employing the adopted SERVQUAL instrument, citizens were instructed to evaluate the services they receive from government agencies in Herat City. To be realized precisely and quickly by respondents, the instruments were translated into Dari, the local language of the city. Fifty individuals were surveyed to conduct a pilot study before the main survey to reduce the errors raised from the translation of the instrument. After the pilot study, the survey was revised to be more straightforward and more explicit regarding language.

Respondents for each organization were chosen through systematic random sampling. To do so, numbers of citizens who went to each governmental organization in a day were divided by 45, which is the target number of responses for each organization. For instance, if 900 citizens received services from a specific government agency, 900 was divided by 45 which resulted in 20. This meant every 20th person received a survey. The first respondent was chosen randomly from the first 20 clients who received services from

the organization, and every 20th person was selected thereafter. For example, if client number 15 was randomly chosen as the first respondent, every 20th client was provided with a survey: 15, 35, 55, 75, and so forth until a total of 45 clients were selected and given the survey. All 57 agencies followed this same procedure, which resulted in a total of 2,565 surveys.

Participation in this study was voluntary. The data collection was conducted through paper/pencil survey. Each participant received a packet including consent/information form, a copy of the survey, and a pen. The survey was expected to last between 25 to 35 minutes. After completion of the survey, the participants returned the filled-out questionnaire to the surveyor. Of those, 2,565 surveys distributed, 2,495 were completed, resulting in a response rate of 97 percent. A one-week interval was considered to survey the respondents from each government agency, and at least, 30 individuals were surveyed for each government agency in Herat City. The survey was conducted in 2017.

Data Analysis

To analyze the survey data, descriptive statistics were used to explain and interpret general trends among the responses. SPSS was used for data analysis in this study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency or reliability of the survey tool. Paired Sample T-tests were used to test the significance of the individual and overall gaps.

Study Limitations

Although the survey was carefully designed and conducted, the entire research study was carefully prepared, and the study has reached its aims, there were still some unavoidable limitations.

This research study is limited to those organizations which provide services directly to the citizens because the sample in this study is drawn from those citizens who directly go to a government agency for the services. This study does not include the governmental organizations which provide services to other organizations. This study is also limited to those who happen to receive surveys or need to see government that day. In addition, depending on which agency, the citizens may have come there on the worst day, which might inflate expectations and deflate perceptions.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the research methodology and research design. Population in this study includes all Herat Citizens who received public services from one of the 57 government agencies. An adapted SERVQUAL instrument was used to survey 2,565 individuals and 2495 complete surveys were collected. In the following chapter, the collected data and technical tools utilized to test the hypotheses.

CHAPTER 6

EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To test my hypotheses, which broadly states that service recipients in Herat City, Afghanistan will report lower quality of service than their expectations, I collected data using a survey. In this chapter, I present these findings. Descriptive and inferential Statistics were used to analyze, test, and interpret the collected data, which mainly reflects Herat citizens' expectations and perceptions of public service quality. Using the SERVQUAL model, the gap score analysis was done to measure the quality of the services and paired t-test was conducted to test the research hypotheses. In order to simplify the data analysis in this study, the researcher coded the SERVQUAL items as well as the dimensions.

Demographic Characteristics

The sampling frame for this study included all citizens who received public services from any of the 57 governmental agencies that provided public services in Herat City, Afghanistan. In total, of 2,565 citizens who received a survey, 2,495 completed the survey and are included in the following analyses.

Table 6. 1

Demographics (n=2495)

Variable	Frequency	(%)
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	1907	76.4
Female	588	23.6
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	994	39.8
Married	1477	59.2
Others	24	1
<i>Age</i>		
19-20	329	13.2
21-25	887	35.6
26-30	453	18.2
31-35	339	13.6
36-40	226	9.1
41-46	101	4
>46	160	6.4
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>		
<12	1066	42.7
High School Graduate	621	24.9
Diploma_14	234	9.4
Bachelor	562	22.5
Master	9	0.4
PhD	3	0.1
<i>Occupation</i>		
Public	408	16.4
Private	376	15.1
Self-employed	783	31.4
Student	544	21.8
Other	384	15.4

Table 6.1 displays summary statistics for survey respondents' gender, marital status, age, level of education, and occupation. More respondents identify as male (76.4 percent) than female (23.4) were included in the sample, and most of the respondents were married. Over half of all respondents were under 30 years old, with the largest age group

consisting of 21 to 25 year olds. Representing only 6.4 percent of the sample, few individuals over the age of 46 responded to survey. While this sample does not reflect the broader population in Afghanistan (across Afghanistan, 51 percent of the population is male, and there exists a much broader age range), it is likely to reflect the population of Afghans who access public services.

The majority of respondents had a high school degree or less, and only 12 (0.5 percent) of the 2,495 respondents had completed a graduate degree. The occupation of the respondents varied across the different sectors. Self-employed individuals (31.4 percent) made up the largest group, while those who worked in the public, private, and other sectors represented nearly half of all respondents. Students made up the remaining 21.8 percent of respondents.

Number of Visits to Government Agencies

Table 6.2 shows the number of times a citizen had visited the government agency for which he or she was assessing.

Table 6. 2

Number of Visits over the Past Two Years

Number of Visits	Frequency	Percent
0	310	12.4
1-4	1301	52.1
5-9	470	18.8
>10	414	16.6
Total (<i>n</i> =2495)	2495	100.0

The table illustrates that 87.6 percent of the citizens had at least one prior visit. Over half of the respondents visited a specific government organization between 1 – 4 times, inclusive. Over one third of the respondents visited the specific organization 5 times or more over the past two years.

The Citizens’ Responses: Perception vs. Expectation

Table 6.3 shows the accumulation of all the responses in this study. There were 25 positive statements for each aspect (perception and expectation), and each statement was evaluated through the seven-point Likert Scale. Thus, the respondents could give a score from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) to each statement in the adopted instrument. A score of 4 meant that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. A total of 2,495 complete surveys gathered. Each participant had 25 responses (from 1 to 7) for the perception items and 25 responses for the expectation items. Therefore, there were a total of 62,375 responses (2495*25) for each aspect (perception and expectation). Table 6.3 displays the citizens’ general trend on public service quality through showing the frequency of scores (1-7) for their perception and expectation.

Table 6. 3

The Citizens’ Responses: Perception vs. Expectation

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<i>Perception</i>								
Frequency	4432	8509	10613	8292	14207	11042	5280	62375
(%)	7.11	13.64	17.01	13.29	22.78	17.70	8.46	100
<i>Expectation</i>								
Frequency	181	246	399	902	3190	13337	44120	62375
(%)	0.29	0.39	0.64	1.45	5.11	21.38	70.73	100

As it can be seen in the first row, which shows the frequency and percentage of all the responses for the citizens' perception, 37.76 percent of the respondents gave a score lower than 4 to the 25 statements in the perception dimension, meaning that they disagreed that the quality of public service in that specific government agency was high. Among all the respondents, 48.94 percent of them gave a score of 5, 6, or 7 to the 25 statements in this dimension, meaning that they agreed with the positives statements which indicate the quality of public service in that specific government agency was high.

The trend was very different in for expectations. Only 1.32 percent of the respondents gave a score of 1, 2, or 3 to the statements in expectation dimension, and 97.23 percent of the respondents gave a score of higher than 4 to these statements, meaning that they agreed with the positives statements which indicate the quality of public service in a good government agency should be high. This very high percentage shows the citizen's high willing for a higher quality of public service in Herat City, Afghanistan. It is worth reminding that *citizens' expectations* reflect the citizens' expectations from an ideal government organization, no the organization in which they just went to.

Instrument Reliability

Reliability is about the consistency of the research instrument. If the research instrument is used several times and always gives the same results, the tool is reliable (Eller, Gerber, & Robinson, 2013). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency or reliability of the survey tool. Calculation of Cronbach's alpha is recommended to assess the internal reliability of multiple-item scales (Nunnally, 1978).

According to Nunnally (1978), a value of alpha below 0.70 is not acceptable. Generally, if the Cronbach's alpha for an item in any of the dimensions is below 0.7, the relevant item should be deleted in order to increase the Cronbach's alpha to above 0.7 for that specific dimension.

In this study, the adopted survey has 5 dimensions with 4 to 7 items in each dimension. As Table 6.4 displays, all dimensions and their items had an alpha value of at least 0.7. The overall reliability of SERVQUAL for this study was 0.94 which is close to the overall reliability of 0.92 in Parasuraman et al., (1988) study. High overall reliability of the SERVQUAL –for all dimension of the tool –in this study means that the instrument is a useful instrument for measuring public service quality in Herat City, Afghanistan. Also, the values of Alpha for all individual dimensions were higher than 0.7, meaning that each dimension, as a part of the scale, is also reliable to measure the aimed items.

Table 6. 4

Reliability Coefficients (alpha) of SERVQUAL scale (n=2495)

Dimensions	Perception	Expectation	Cronbach's Alpha (Gaps)
Tangibles	0.805	0.862	0.730
Reliability	0.869	0.875	0.786
Responsiveness	0.914	0.912	0.851
Assurance	0.860	0.838	0.757
Empathy	0.897	0.887	0.813
Overall (25 Items)	0.962	0.965	0.947

Gap Analysis

Citizens' expectations and perceptions were measured using the seven-point Likert scales for each item. Responses were combined for an average responses in each of the five dimensions, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The higher number in this scale shows the higher level of the citizens' perception and expectation. It is worth reminding that by *citizens' expectations*, I do not mean what they expect from the organization they just went to but instead mean the expectations of an ideal government organization.

The difference between the perception and expectation shows a gap (perception - expectation). If the gap is positive (P-E= positive value), it means that the citizen's perception is higher than their expectation and therefore, the quality of public services meets or exceeds citizens' expectation. If the gap is negative (P-E= negative value), it means that the citizens' expectation is higher than their perception and therefore, the quality of public services does not meet the citizens' expectation. The larger the negative gap between perception and expectation is, the lower the quality of the delivered service is from citizens' perspective. Similarly, the larger the positive gap between perception and expectation is, the higher the quality of the delivered public service is from citizens' perspective. Also, a larger negative gap between expectation and perception may show a larger scope for improvement in public service delivery.

Table 6. 5

Gap Analysis

Dimension	Items	Perception (Mean)	Expectation (Mean)	Gap (P-E) For Each Item	Gap (P-E) (Mean)
Tangibles	TA1	4.13	6.56	-2.43	-2.05
	TA2	4.49	6.54	-2.05	
	TA3	4.93	6.53	-1.60	
	TA4	4.43	6.53	-2.10	
Reliability	RL1	3.98	6.63	-2.64	-2.60
	RL2	4.02	6.60	-2.58	
	RL3	3.77	6.55	-2.78	
	RL4	3.90	6.61	-2.71	
	RL5	4.29	6.59	-2.31	
Responsiveness	RN1	4.23	6.54	-2.31	-2.46
	RN2	4.01	6.58	-2.56	
	RN3	4.11	6.55	-2.44	
	RN4	4.13	6.56	-2.43	
	RN5	4.10	6.58	-2.48	
	RN6	4.15	6.57	-2.42	
	RN7	4.03	6.60	-2.57	
Assurance	AS1	4.17	6.59	-2.42	-2.26
	AS2	4.35	6.57	-2.22	
	AS3	4.54	6.64	-2.09	
	AS4	4.33	6.62	-2.29	
Empathy	EM1	4.01	6.56	-2.55	-2.51
	EM2	3.96	6.65	-2.69	
	EM3	4.14	6.55	-2.41	
	EM4	4.14	6.56	-2.42	
	EM5	4.14	6.60	-2.46	
Overall Average (<i>n</i> =2495)		4.21	6.58		-2.37

Table 6.5 displays the results of citizens' perception and expectation and the gap (P-E) for each item, for each dimension, and for the citizens' general views in Herat City, Afghanistan. As already mentioned, each item was evaluated through the seven-point

Likert Scale. If the mean perception for an item is lower than 4, the citizens perceive the quality of public service for that specific item to be low, and if the mean perception for an item is greater than 4, it means that the citizens perceive the quality of public service for that specific item to be high. It is the same for the citizens' expectation. Considering the mean expectation constant, the greater the mean perception is than 4, the higher the quality of public service is from citizens' perception.

Every item has a negative gap, and approximately the same gaps are seen in all 25 items, resulting in almost the identical gaps across the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. The Herat citizens' average perception of public service quality across all the individual dimensions was 4.21. This average is less than their average expectations of service quality which was 6.58. Since all the items across all the five dimensions had negative gaps, the average gap (across all the dimensions) of service quality in Herat City's public service delivery was -2.37. In other words, since the citizens' average perception was lower than their average expectation, a negative average gap existed in public service delivery in Herat City, meaning that the governmental agencies were not able to meet the citizens' expectations and therefore, must take the large gap very serious and invest in the items that have enlarged the gap.

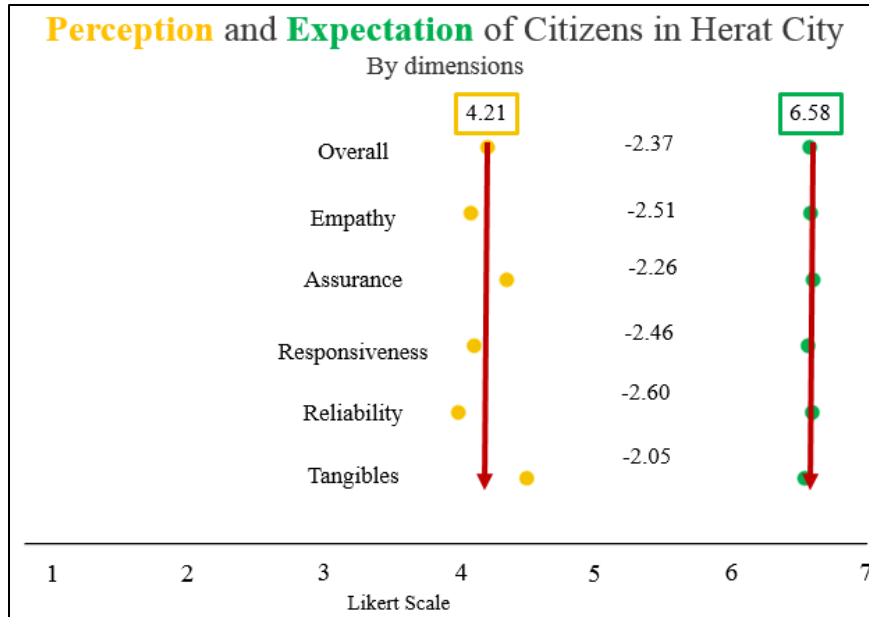


Figure 6. 1. Citizens' Expectations and Perceptions

Figure 6.1 shows that the citizens' expectations and perceptions for all the individual dimensions. Citizens' expectation across all the five dimensions were approximately the same while slight variations are seen on perceptions across the individual dimensions. This means that citizens generally expect high levels of service quality, regardless of what type of service. Thus, gap variations were largely attributable to variations in quality perceptions, rather than changes in expectations. As the Table 6.4 displays, this variation (at the item level) can be seen in the dimensions of reliability with an overall score of -2.60 and empathy with an overall score of -2.51, the two largest gaps respectively. The low level of the citizens' perceptions in some items of these two dimensions, including the items RL1, RL3, RL4, and EM2 with a score of lower than 4, has enlarged the gaps in the dimensions.

Service Perception, Expectation, and Gaps by Demographics

Table 6.6 shows the standard deviation, mean, min, and max values for the citizen's perception, expectation, and the expectation-perception gap.

Table 6. 6

Perception, Expectation, and Gap

Dimension	Mean	Standard Devia- tion	Min	Max
Perception	4.20	1.23	1	7
Expectation	6.58	0.60	2	7
Gap	-2.37	1.33	-6	2.55

The mean perception for the full sample was lower than the mean expectation. Perception had the higher standard deviation (1.23) and a bigger range (6). This establishes that differences in gaps are a function of perception, not expectation. It is worth noting that the gaps have a range of 8.55. I will use the standard deviation of the gap as a tool to tell whether some differences in the mean perception, mean expectation, and the gaps across demographics are actually practically significant in next table.

Table 6.7 shows the overall perception, expectation, and gaps by demographic characteristics including sex, level of education, occupation type, age, and marital status.

Table 6. 7

Service Perception, Expectation, and Gaps by Demographics

Dimension	Perception (Mean)	Expectation (Mean)	Gap (P-E) for Each Dimension
Gender			
Male	4.26	6.58	-2.32
Female	4.03	6.58	-2.54
Overall	4.20	6.58	-2.37
Marital Status			
Single	4.04	6.53	-2.49
Married	4.32	6.61	-2.29
Others	3.78	6.71	-2.93
Overall	4.20	6.58	-2.37
Age			
19-25	4.13	6.52	-2.39
26-30	4.12	6.62	-2.50
31-35	4.23	6.67	-2.43
36-40	4.38	6.67	-2.29
41-46	4.50	6.58	-2.08
above 46	4.53	6.61	-2.08
Overall	4.20	6.58	-2.37
Highest Level of Education			
<12	4.40	6.62	-2.22
High School Graduate	4.15	6.54	-2.39
Diploma_14	4.14	6.56	-2.42
Bachelor	3.94	6.54	-2.60
Master	3.56	6.83	-3.27
PhD	2.81	6.95	-4.14
Overall	4.20	6.58	-2.37
Occupation			
Public	4.63	6.67	-2.04
Private	3.98	6.59	-2.60
Self-employed	4.28	6.57	-2.29
Student	4.04	6.47	-2.44
Other	4.05	6.63	-2.58
Overall	4.20	6.58	-2.37

As it can be in Table 6.7, there were differences between the citizens' expectations and their perceptions across all the demographic attributes. The citizens' expectations across all demographic characteristics were greater than 6.5, but no sensible variations were seen among the citizens' expectation in different components of a specific demographic characteristic, such as, for instance, sex.

Across all demographic attributes, the citizens' perceptions were lower than their expectations, resulting in negative gaps for all components of all demographics. In gender and marital status, the variations of the citizens' perception were less than half of the standard deviation for the overall perception (1.23), meaning that the differences in the components of each of these categories are not practically that much significant.

Although the range of perception in the age groups category is almost one-third of the standard deviations for overall perception, the table shows that as age groups increases from "19-25" to "above 46", the gap of public services quality in Herat City gradually decreases, displaying a diverse relationship between the citizens' age and the gap of public service quality.

In the education category, the range of perception (1.59) is higher than the standard deviation for the overall perception, meaning that the differences of perceptions among the components of this category are practically significant. Also, the table displays that the higher the respondents' education level is, the lower the citizens' perception of public service quality will be. This indirect relationship results in larger gaps – with practically significant differences across all components – and shows a direct relationship between the level of education and the public service quality gaps in Herat City. Difference between

the graduate degree and less than the graduate degree is substantive (approximately 1.25 standard deviations). However, the sub-sample of graduate-degree earners was relatively small and may not be large enough to draw an accurate inference about the population of graduate degree earners in Herat City. On the other hand, very few Herat City citizens hold graduate degrees, so the small sub-sample may be sufficient when considering that the proportion of graduate degree earners in the sample likely mirrors that of the proportion of the graduate degree earners in the population.

The gap in public service quality was the lowest from the public employees' perspective because of their higher level of perception. The difference in the private employees' perception and public employee's perception is practically significant (approx. half of the std. deviation for the overall perception), resulting in the differences in the related gaps.

Hypotheses Testing

As discussed in Chapter IV, the hypotheses in this study have been formed based on the explanation which indicates that like other countries the citizens' expectations of public service quality are higher than their perceptions. Therefore, I expect negative gaps to exist in all dimensions of public service quality in Herat City, Afghanistan. Now I will empirically test the theory described in Afghanistan context. Paired Sample T-test was used to test whether or not there are significant gaps between citizens' perception and their expectation of public service quality in individual dimensions as well as the overall gap. The main hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H₀: There is no significant negative difference between citizens' expectations and perceptions regarding the public service quality in Herat city, where a significant difference is defined as a gap of at least one between a respondent's perception and expectation ($H_0: \mu_E = \mu_P; \alpha \leq 0.05$).

H_a: There is a significant negative difference between citizens' expectations and perceptions regarding the public service quality in Herat City, where a significant difference is defined as a gap of at least one between a respondent's perception and expectation ($H_a: \mu_E \neq \mu_P; \alpha \leq 0.05$).

where

μ_E is the population mean of citizens' expectation of public service quality.

μ_P is the population mean of citizens' perception of public service quality.

In this study, the null hypothesis indicates that the citizens' expectations are not different than their perceptions, while the alternative hypothesis assumes that the citizen's expectations are higher than their perceptions, resulting in a negative gap in public service quality in Afghanistan context. A difference of at least one on a Likert scale between the citizens' expectation and perceptions is considered significant. In addition to the difference in overall perception and expectation, I will also empirically test whether the gap exists for each of the five components. The hypothesis stated above holds for each separate component.

Table 6. 8

Paired-Samples T-Tests

	<i>Percep- tion</i>	<i>Expecta- tion</i>	<i>Gap</i>	95% Confidence In- terval of the Differ- ence		<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Mean (Std. Dev.)</i>	<i>Mean (Std. Dev.)</i>	<i>Mean (Std. Dev.)</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	
Tangible	4.495 (1.352)	6.542 (0.732)	-2.046 (1.483)	-2.105	-1.988	<0.001
Reliability	3.992 (1.416)	6.595 (0.672)	-2.6029 (1.537)	-2.66332	-2.542	<0.001
Responsive- ness	4.108 (1.392)	6.5664 (0.660)	-2.4587 (1.513)	-2.51815	-2.399	<0.001
Assurance	4.348 (1.443)	6.603 (0.653)	-2.2546 (1.537)	-2.31494	-2.1942	<0.001
Empathy	4.0802 (1.454)	6.5851 (0.670)	-2.5048 (1.55486)	-2.56589	-2.443	<0.001
Overall	4.205 (1.231)	6.578 (0.604)	-2.374 (1.326)	-2.4255	-2.3214	<0.001

df= 2,494

Table 6.8 displays the results of the primary hypothesis testing as well as the sub-hypotheses testing.

The paired-samples t-test was conducted to test the primary hypothesis that citizens' perception of public service quality ($M = 4.2048$, $SD = 1.23088$) and citizens' expectation of public service quality means ($M = 6.5783$, $SD = 0.60416$). As can be seen in table 5.6, the level of significance was <0.001 . This value, which is referred to as the p-value, shows whether the two conditions (expectation and perception) are statistically different or not. The null hypothesis of equal citizens' mean perception and citizens' mean expectation was rejected, $t(2,494) = -89.443$, $P \leq 0.05$. In other words, it can be said that

there is enough evidence to suggest that the difference between citizens' perception of public service quality and their expectation of public service quality was statistically significant in Herat City, $t(2494) = -89.443$, $P \leq 0.05$, as it is greater than 1. The t value is a negative score which means that citizens' perception of public service quality was less than their expectation of public service quality in Herat City; therefore, a negative gap existed in public service quality in Herat City. The standard deviations across all dimension on perception are higher than the standard deviations on expectations, displaying more fluctuations on the citizens' perceptions than their expectations. The existence of the average negative gap in public service quality shows that the Afghanistan follows the trend in other countries, thus the first explanation about the theoretical expectations is applicable to Afghanistan context.

As the studies in other countries showed, the individual dimensions may have a different outcome than overall SERVQUAL (i.e., $P > E$ instead of $E > P$ for tangibles, responsiveness, etc.). A broader discussion of why these subcategories may have different outcomes and gaps is warranted but beyond of the scope of this thesis. However, Table 5.5 includes estimations of these differences to provide more contexts for the overall results. All of the paired t-test results for the subcategories mirror the results of the overall perception-expectation gap. The gap between perception and expectation ranged from -2.05 (tangibles) to -2.6 (reliability). It is worth mentioning that standard deviations, confidence intervals, t value, and significance levels across all individual dimensions were all very similar.

Conclusion

The chapter presented the data analysis of the responses and the demographic profile of the respondents. The gap analysis and Paired Sample T-Test showed that the citizens' expectations of public service quality in Herat City were higher than their perceptions. A gap of -2.37 is seen in the quality of public services delivered by government agencies in Herat City. The largest gaps existed in reliability and empathy dimensions. The smallest gap was seen in the tangibles dimensions. The Paired Sample T-Test rejected the null hypotheses in favor of the alternative hypotheses, claiming a negative gap between the citizens' expectation and perception regarding public service quality in Herat City. The significant negative gap in public service quality suggests the explanation that the citizens' expectation-perception gap in Afghanistan follows the trend in other country.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show a significant difference in the citizens' expectations and perception of public service quality in Herat City. This difference is applicable in each of the five dimensions of service quality, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In this chapter, I will summarize the results, describe implications, and make recommendation based on the results. I will conclude with some suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

After the Taliban Regime, a new era started in Afghanistan. Billions of dollars in donations have been allocated to rebuild the economic, political, and social fundamentals of the country, and millions of these grant dollars have been spent on good governance and public service delivery enhancement. Government agencies in Afghanistan, as a post-conflict country, need to know their current standing regarding the quality of the services they provide to the public.

Given this motivation, I used the SERVQUAL model to survey citizens in Herat City, Afghanistan about their expectations and perceptions of public service quality. With their responses, I was able to analyze the gaps between what the public expects to receive

and what they perceive to have received. Combined, this analysis helped to answer the following primary research questions:

- How do citizens perceive the quality of public service delivered by government agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan?
- How do citizens expect the quality of public service delivered by government agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan?
- What is the expectation-perception gap in different dimensions of the services delivered by government agencies in Herat City, Afghanistan?

Results revealed that the citizens' overall perception of public service quality in Herat City was 4.20. Perceptions of citizens are what they actually receive from service providers (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The study also found the citizens' overall expectation of public service quality in Herat City was 6.58. Expectations are considered as desires of service consumers and what these consumers feel a service organization should provide rather than would provide to them (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The gap analysis shows that citizens' expectations of public service quality exceeded their perception and therefore, the overall perceived quality of public service is low in the city. In other words, the gap analysis shows a large negative gap between the citizens' perception of public service quality and their expectation of public service quality in Herat City. Since service quality is defined by this gap (Parasuraman et al. 1988), a government agency can claim that it is delivering high/good quality services to the citizens only when the perceived quality of the service exceeds or at least meet the citizens' expectations. Based on this definition, government organizations provided a poor quality of public services in Herat since the overall quality gap in Herat was -2.37. Parasuraman et al., 1985

discussed that if service providers intend to close or reduce the gap between their performance and customers' expectations, they need to measure the gap and invest in its reduction. Thus, government agencies in Herat City must take the large negative gap very serious and invest in the items that have enlarged the gap to reduce the gaps.

It is also important to consider individual dimension gaps (Parasuraman et al. 1985). Herat citizen expectations in all dimensions were around 6.5 with very little variation. Conversely, their perceptions of public service quality were around 4 with more visible variations in perception levels among the sub-categories. In short, the negative gap in all five individual dimensions indicate the government agencies' failure in satisfying the citizens' needs and expectations in Herat City.

The relationship between service quality and service users' satisfaction has been studied by several researchers. High service quality can lead to service users' satisfaction and low service quality can lead to users' dissatisfaction of the services (Negi, 2009; Ladhari, 2009), however service quality does not represent the service users' satisfaction. Citizens in Herat City perceive service quality in each dimension to be poor, and since poor service quality fails to satisfy the citizens' expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1988), citizens are not satisfied with the quality of public service delivered by government agencies in Herat City.

Understanding how citizens perceive the quality of public service delivery will benefit the public administrators in Herat City. The evidence from the study shows that public administrators in Herat city should improve their organizations' performance across all dimensions of service quality in order to increase the citizens' satisfaction with the quality

of public service delivery. Ignoring the citizens' satisfaction may result in citizens' distrust toward government.

Implications and Conclusion

This paper aims to measure the public service quality delivered by 57 government agencies in Herat City. This purpose was fulfilled by measuring the citizens' perception and expectation of public service quality in this city. By measuring the quality of public service, this study empirically equips government agencies with an accurate assessment of public service quality in all dimensions. The findings of the study demonstrate that government agencies in Herat City have been incapable of meeting citizens' expectation.

The findings of this study also provide the government agencies with empirical ability to learn their current standing regarding service quality and how far they are from where they would like to be to meet citizens' expectations. This knowledge is a fundamental step in public service quality management for public agencies in Herat City and helps them learn where they need to focus to reduce the gaps.

The negative gap exists in each dimension, meaning that service quality was low in all individual dimensions. Although the gaps in the five dimensions were not the same, the differences among the gaps were slight. The general implication for the agencies is to invest and pay attentions to each dimension in order reduce the individual dimensions' gaps and the overall gap in quality of public service. To reduce the reliability gaps, the government agencies should invest in resources and training that enable the public servants to deliver the services they promised to the service users at the promised deadlines. Also, the

government agencies should to invest in training that builds and improves customer-centered perspective and performance among the public servants in order to reduce the empathy gap. Besides, an investment in improving organization's ability to assist the users with what they need in a quick and responsive manner is a vital need for government agencies in Herat City and would help them reduce responsiveness. Moreover, the agencies should invest in resources and training that improve employees' respectfulness, trustworthiness, skillfulness, and inspiration. As a result, citizens feel secure and safe while sharing their concerns and needs with the organization. Finally, they should equip their agencies with new equipment and infrastructures or on improving current equipment and infrastructures in order to reduce the tangibles gap.

Finally, by measuring the citizens' perception and expectation of public service quality, this study shows that SERVQUAL is an efficient instrument to assess public service quality in government agencies because each dimension demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability. Thus, government agencies should use SERVQUAL and do a periodic assessment of the ultimate product they supply to the citizens to enhance their performance quality. Being aware of where they are standing regarding public service quality and citizens' satisfaction, the government agencies will be able to gradually close or at least reduce the negative gap in quality of public service and therefore, improve the public trust to government.

Recommendations for Government Agencies

Based on the results of this thesis, I offer the following suggestions for public organizations in Herat City, Afghanistan. These suggestions may also be of use public organizations across Afghanistan at multiple levels.

- Given a lack of explicitly stated service quality strategies, government agencies should develop specific strategies for service quality and update them regularly in response to quality measurements.
- The government agencies should track citizens' perceptions and expectations and use the collected data to enrich and update their service quality strategies.
- When the agencies are developing their strategic and annual budgets, they should allocate enough resources for the enhancement of service quality dimensions that lack quality from citizens' perspective.
- The government agencies should track their employees' perceptions of service quality and invest in reducing the negative gap between employee's perception and the citizens' expectation.
- Training should be held for the government employees to learn about the citizens' perception and expectation of the services they are delivering, and employees should be trained to learn if there are gaps between their perception and the citizens' perception.
- Management of government agencies is highly recommended to increase their contact with the citizens

Suggestions for Future Research

Following the completion of this thesis, I plan to continue research on the public service quality of organizations in Afghanistan. Below are potential avenues for future research. One of the reasons for the low quality of public service quality in Herat City may be that government employees perceive they are providing high-quality services to the citizens while the citizens' perceived service quality is low, based on the finding of the study. The difference between employees' perception and the citizens' perception may be a strong reason for low quality public service delivery in governmental agencies in the city. Future researchers are recommended to measure the quality of public services from government employees' perspective.

Using the SERVQUAL, periodic studies should be conducted to measure the quality of services in the same 57 agencies to track the citizens' perception and expectation, the gap in each dimension, and the overall service quality. Such a time-based research approach enables the agencies to examine and enrich their service quality management systems. In addition, future research should include the role of demographics in shaping the citizens' perception and expectation in Herat City. Furthermore, a comparative study should be carried out to study the quality of public sector delivered by each of these 57 government agencies in Herat City. Future research could unravel the important literature on street level bureaucracy in Afghanistan to explain interactions between citizens and government. The street level bureaucracy literature in developing countries is less known, and future studies can pave the way for important breakthrough in this area. The study could be expanded to include other cities and different income groups (suburbs vs. rural)

to provide important insights to why gaps in expectations varies across geographic regions and income groups.

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APPENDIX A

CODING

Table 1:

Codes for SERVQUAL Items and Dimension

Tangibles (TA)	
TA1	Modern Looking Equipment to Deliver the Service.
TA2	The Physical Facilities Are Visually Appealing.
TA3	Employees Are Neat in Their Appearance.
TA4	Materials Associated with the Service (Pamphlets or Statements) Are Visually Appealing.
Reliability (RL)	
RL1	When The Organization Promises to Do Something, It Does so.
RL2	When You, as a Citizen, Have a Problem, The Organization Shows a Sincere Interest in Solving it.
RL3	The Organization Performs the Service Right the First Time.
RL4	The Organization Provides the Service at the Time It Promises to Do so.
RL5	The Organization Insist on Error Free Records.
Responsiveness (RN)	
RN1	Employees Tell You Exactly What Services Will Be Performed (Clear and Measurable Promises).
RN2	Employees Give Prompt service to you.
RN3	Employees Are Always Willing to Help You.
RN4	Employees Are Never Too Busy to Respond to Your Request.
RN5	Employees Provide You with Clear and Understandable Information to Respond to Your Request.
RN6	Employees Tell You Exactly When Services Will Be Performed.
RN7	Employees Are Committed and Responsive to Follow up Your Complaints.
Assurance (AS)	
AS1	The Behavior of Employees Instills Confidence in You.
AS2	You Feel Safe in Dealing with This Governmental Organization.
AS3	Employees Are consistently Courteous and Friendly with You.
AS4	Employees Have the Knowledge and Skills to Answer Your Questions.
Empathy (EM)	
EM1:	The Organization Gives You Individual Attention.
EM2	The Organization Tries It's Best to Prevent the Loss of Your Rights.
EM3	The Organization Has employees who Care about Your Values, Ideas, and Feelings.
EM4	The Organization Has Your Best Interest at Heart.
EM5	The Employees Understand Your Specific Needs.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Public Service Quality in Developing World

A Case Study of Governmental Organizations in Herat City, Afghanistan

SECTION 1: Demographic Information

Gender: Male Female Others

Status Single Married Others

Age: 19- 20 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-46 above 46

Education: Under 12 High School Graduate Undergraduate Graduate PhD

Others,...

Employer: Public Sector Private Sector Own business Student

Others,

SECTION 2: Service Perceptions

For each statement, please show the extent to which you believe this governmental organization possesses and demonstrates the feature described by the statement. If you neither agree nor disagree with this that the organization possesses or demonstrates the feature described in the statement, check the box under the Neutral.

There is not any right or wrong answer - all that we are interested in is the degree that truly reflects your feelings regarding the quality of the services provided and delivered by this governmental organization.

N O	Perception	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	This governmental organization has modern looking equipment to deliver the service.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2	The physical facilities in this governmental organization are visually appealing.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3	Employees in this governmental organization are neat in their appearance.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	Materials associated with the service (pamphlets) are visually appealing in this governmental organization.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	When this governmental organization promises to do something, it does so.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	When you, as a citizen, have a problem, this governmental organization shows a sincere interest in solving it.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7	This governmental organization performs the service right the first time.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8	This governmental organization provides the service at the time it promises to do so.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	This governmental organization insists on error free records.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	Employees of this governmental organization tell you exactly what services will be performed (clear and measurable promises).	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	Employees of this governmental organization give prompt service to you.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

12	Employees of this governmental organization are always willing to help you.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	Employees of this governmental organization are never too busy to respond to your request.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14	Employees of this organization provide you with clear and understandable information to respond to your request.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15	Employees of this governmental organization tell you exactly when services will be performed.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	Employees of this governmental organization are committed and responsive to follow up your complaints.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17	The behaviour of employees in this governmental organization instils confidence in you.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
18	You feel safe in dealing with this governmental organization.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	Employees of this governmental organization are consistently courteous and friendly with you.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
20	Employees of this governmental organization have the knowledge and skills to answer your questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21	This governmental organization gives you individual attention.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22	This governmental organization tries its best to prevent the loss of your rights.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23	This governmental organization has employees who care	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

	about your values, ideas, and feelings.							
24	This governmental organization has your best interest at heart.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
25	The employees of this governmental organization understand your specific needs.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Over the past 2 years, how many times have you utilized the services of this governmental organization?

- 1- 0
- 2- 1-4
- 3- 5-9
- 4- 10 or more

In general, what do you think about the quality of service delivery by all governmental organizations in Herat City?

Very High High Somewhat High Neutral Somewhat Low Low Very Low

SECTION 3: Service Expectations

Based upon your experience as a citizen of Herat City who has received services from a governmental organization, please visualize what a good governmental organization would look like, the excellent types of services that it would provide, and what you would consider to be a good level of customer service.

As you answer each of the survey questions below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. If you neither agree nor disagree that that a feature is essential

for ideal governmental organization, such as the one you have visualized, to possess check the box under the Neutral.

Again, there is not any right or wrong answer - all that we are interested in is the degree that truly reflects your feelings regarding governmental organizations that would deliver an excellent quality of service

N O	Expectations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Good governmental organizations will have modern looking equipment.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2	The physical facilities in good governmental organizations will be visually appealing.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3	Employees in good governmental organizations will be neat in their appearance.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	Materials associated with the service (pamphlets) will be visually appealing in a good governmental organization.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	When good governmental organizations promise to do something, they do.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	When a citizen has a problem, good governmental organizations will show a sincere interest in solving it.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7	Good governmental organizations will perform the service right the first time.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8	Good governmental organizations will provide the service at the time they promise to do so.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9	Good governmental organizations will insist on error free records.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	Employees of good governmental organizations will tell citizens exactly what services will be performed.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	Employees of good governmental organizations will give prompt service to citizens.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12	Employees of good governmental organizations will always be willing to help citizens.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	Employees of good governmental organizations will never be too busy to respond to citizens' requests.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14	Employees of good governmental organizations provide the citizens with clear and understandable information to respond their requests.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15	Employees of good governmental organizations tell citizens exactly when services will be performed.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	Employees of good governmental organizations are committed and responsive to follow up citizens' complaints.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17	The behaviour of employees in good governmental organizations will instil confidence in citizens	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
18	Citizens of good governmental organizations will feel safe in dealing with the organizations.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	Employees of good governmental organizations will be	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

	consistently courteous and friendly with citizens.							
20	Employees of good governmental organizations will have the knowledge and skills to answer citizens' questions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21	Good governmental organizations will give citizens individual attention.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22	Good governmental organizations try their best to prevent the loss of citizens' rights.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23	Good governmental organizations have employees who care about citizens' values, ideas, and feelings.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
24	Good governmental organizations will have their citizens' best interest at heart.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
25	The employees of good governmental organizations will understand the specific needs of their citizens.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

SECTION 3: Five Feature Ranking

Listed below are five features pertaining to governmental organizations and the service they offer. We would like to know how important each of these features is to you when you evaluate the service offered by a governmental organization. Please allocate a total of 100 points among the five features according to how important each feature is to you - the more important a feature is to you, the more points you should allocate to it. Please ensure that the points you allocate to the five features add up to 100.

	Features	Points
1	The organization's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately	

2	The organization's willingness to help citizens and provide prompt service.	
3	The knowledge and courtesy of the organization's employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.	
4	The appearance of this governmental organization's physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.	
5	The caring individual attention the organization provides the citizens.	
	Total:	100

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board for Human Use

Exemption Designation
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on November 8, 2021. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56.

Principal Investigator: Jahani, Firooz

Co-Investigator(s):

Protocol Number: **E170511002**

Protocol Title: *Improving the Quality of Public Service in Developing World: a Case Study of Governmental Organizations in Herat City, Afghanistan*

The above project was reviewed on 6/12/17. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This project qualifies as an exemption as defined in 45CFR46.101(b), paragraph 2.

This project received EXEMPT review.

Date IRB Designation Issued: 6/12/17

Cari Oliver, CIP
Assistant Director, Office of the
Institutional Review Board for Human
Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form/information sheet must be submitted for review to the IRB prior to implementation.

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APPENDIX D

LIST OF GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Table 2

List of Governmental Organizations

NO	Name of the Organization
1	Herat Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
2	Population Registration Directorate
3	Department of Urban Development Affairs
4	Herat Municipality
5	Department of Haj and religious Affairs
6	Department of Women's Affairs
7	Afghanistan Independent Land Authority- Herat Branch
8	Police Department
9	Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
10	Afghanistan Central Bank - Herat Branch
11	Directorate of Lower Harirud River Basin
12	The Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption - Herat
13	The Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat - Herat
14	Directorate of Physical Education and Sport
15	Directorate for Cooperation of Afghan Red Crescent Society-Western Zone Office
16	Directorate of Harirud-Murghab Rivers Basin
17	Department of Surveys, Mapping, and Cadasters
18	Herat Department of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled
19	Herat Directorate of Kuchi
20	Directorate of Human Resource
21	Provincial Governors' office
22	Department of Refugees and Repatriation
23	Herat Court of Appeals
24	Directorate of Telecommunications and Information Technology
25	Finance Department
26	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority-Herat Branch
27	Department of Water Supply and Sewerage
28	Department of Justice
29	Afsooter
30	Directorate of Financial and Administrative Affairs
31	Department of Information and Culture
32	Herat Customs
33	Heart Airport Administration
34	General Directorate of Prisons - Western Zone

35	Department of mines and petroleum
36	Department of Education
37	Department of Environment Protection
38	Department of Counter Narcotics
39	Department of Fuel and Liquid Gas
40	Afghan National Standards Authority - Herat
41	Herat University
42	Appellate Prosecution Directorate
43	Herat Regional Hospital
44	Directorate of Territorial Regulating of Herat Transport
45	Herat Department of Teacher Education and Training
46	Directorate of Radio and TV
47	Herat Department of Commerce and Industry
48	Department of Public Health
49	Directorate for Provincial Council
50	Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission _ Herat Branch
51	Department of Transport
52	Directorate of Foreign Affairs-Herat
53	Directorate of Performance and Record Evaluation
54	Herat Directorate of Youth Affairs
55	Department of Peasant Cooperatives
56	Directorate of Recruitment
57	Directorate of Torghundi Border