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Factors Affecting Front-Line Services of the Bureau of Fire Protection in the National Capital Region

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Abstract: The research aimed to investigate the quality of process of front-line services of Bureau of Fire Protection in National Capital Region (BFP-NCR). The result of survey-interview conducted with BFP personnel who are from the Manila Fire District office and BFP-NCR main office and based on the result of the survey-interview of one hundred five respondents, the BFP-NCR revealed that the following have a positive influence on the service quality of front line service of BFP NCR: Cumbersome process in processing fire safety certificates, delay in the issuance of fire safety certificates, cumbersome record keeping, and difficulty in informing the applicant about the (a) release date of the fire safety certificate, and (b) notification to renew the fire safety certificates. The result of the study were intended to serve as input for improving the service quality of front line services of BFP NCR. **This study also recommended to adopt automated system as the new process of application for fire safety certificates to solve the weaknesses and shortcoming of the existing process,** which will enable the BFP administrators to adequately manage risks by gaining leverage with customer insights to better improve services, and by gaining visibility into their operation to increase the level of effectiveness and provide better services.

Key Words: bureau of fire protection; front-line services; fire safety services; service quality; National Capital Region.

1. INTRODUCTION

The delivery of quality government services is considered as a strategy for the attainment of efficient government. Services, unlike tangible

products, are produced and consumed at the same time in the presence of the customer and the service producer (Parasuraman et al., 2005). The five service quality dimensions that must be considered in delivering services are:



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1. Reliability – the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;
2. Responsiveness – the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;
3. Assurance – a knowledge and courtesy of employee and their ability to convey trust and confidence;
4. Communication – to keep customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them; and
5. Tangibles – the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. (Arlen,2008):

The Philippine government is shifting to a new concept of providing extensive access of government services electronically from devices like computer, laptop, smart-phones and other handled devices, which are much more integrated into daily human life (Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Promoting e-Governance, 2008). The use of technological innovations change the way a citizen accesses and consumes information and the way in which the government offices reached citizens and deliver their services (Fath-allah, Cheikhi, Al-quataish, & Idri, 2014)

The Philippine government is now providing direct public access to the government services like passports and visa approval, land and civil registration and other business and professionals licensing

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) is one of the public sector provides services to prevent and suppress the destructive fire. It is responsible for the enforcement of the Fire Code of the Philippines (Republic Act or RA 9514). Issuance of Fire Safety Evaluation Certificates and Fire Safety Inspection Certificate for every home and business owner requires multiple stages of processes that cause delays in issuing the aforementioned government permits and sometimes it become cause of destructive fire.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the service quality of front-line services of the Fire Safety Enforcement Section of the BFP through interviews with the members of the personnel of the said section, and some recipients of fire safety certificates. Questionnaires are also provided to investigate the

background knowledge on the steps of processing fire safety certificates, and the loopholes of the system.

The researcher/investigator requested for various relevant documents such as the Fire Code of the Philippines 2008 (RA 4578), printed pamphlets dealing on fire safety policy and requirements, sample safety certificate application reports submitted to the BFP-NCR, and sample forms required in application of certificate(s) was also obtained.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study applied the descriptive method of research. The process was to administer interview, and hand out questionnaires to be filled out by the respondents. The purpose of the interview is to determine the process of front-line services of BFP. After the initial interview of seven personnel of BFP, the 150 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, and administered to the members of the personnel and staff of the fire safety department. One hundred five were retrieved and these were all used in the analysis. The adopted questionnaire from (Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Malhotra, A., 2005). contained questions that aimed to measure the following variables based on the determinants of service quality namely (indicators are cited in Table 1):

1. Reliability,
2. Responsiveness,
3. Communication, and
4. Tangibles.

Table 1. Indicators per Service Quality Factor

Factor	No	Indicators
A. Reliability	1	Ability to orderly accommodate applicants
	2	Ability to present information/materials about the set of processes
	3	Ability to provide accurate format of data gathering materials
	4	Ability to entertain additional queries from applicants
	5	Ability to gather both internal and external data
	6	Ability to process applicant transactions with minimal time duration
	7	Ability to provide accurate application results
	8	Ability to release application results on promised date
	9	Ability to satisfy overall expectation
B. Responsiveness	1	Ability to inform applicants as to when services
	2	Ability to orderly accommodate applicants
	3	Ability to provide prompt service to applicants
	4	Ability to extend help in applicants
	5	Ability to respond to customer needs
C. Communication	1	Ability to inform applicants of the requirements of the services
	2	Ability to inform applicants of the status of their application in a prompt manner
	3	Ability to provide applicants to get updates of the status of their application upon request
	4	Ability to provide valid information for report generation
D. Tangibles	1	Ability to provide adequate visually appealing facility
	2	Ability to generate necessary forms
	3	Ability to provide valid reports



The first step made by the investigator was to send a letter for the interview to the personnel of the Fire Safety Enforcement Section of the Manila Fire District and Bureau of Fire Protection in National Capital Region (BFP-NCR). The investigator also interviewed some applicants of fire safety certificates to the BFP. For this purpose, a list of questions was prepared for both the interview and survey questionnaire. The Chief of Fire Safety Enforcement Section and five (5) personnel were interviewed in Manila Fire District, two (2) personnel were interviewed in BFP-NCR and twenty (20) applicant were also interviewed from BFP-NCR. The responses in the questionnaire are calibrated using the Likert scale of 1 through 5 where 1 is Very Ineffective, 2 is Moderately Ineffective, 3 is Moderately Effective, 4 is Effective, and 5 is Very Effective.

The recorded responses to the interview and survey questions, and the documents pertaining to the application of fire safety certificates were comparatively studied and analyzed for evaluation of the administrative process.

All scores in each indicator is averaged and a verbal interpretation (Table 2) is then indicated. The same is done with the general mean computed for each factor.

Table 2. Look-up Table for Average Rating Results

General Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.00 - 1.49	Very Ineffective
1.50 - 2.49	Moderately Ineffective
2.50 - 3.49	Moderately Effective
3.50 - 4.49	Effective
4.50 - 5.00	Very Effective

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information gathered from answers to the interview questions of the personnel of the Fire Safety Enforcement Section of the BFP revealed that new process in applying for fire safety certificated will address the shortcoming of the existing process which among others is the following: cumbersome process in processing fire safety certificates, delay in

the issuance of fire safety certificates, cumbersome record keeping, and difficulty in informing the applicant about the (a) release date of the fire safety certificate, (b) notification to renew the fire safety certificates.

Table 3. Comprehensive Rating for Reliability

Indicator No.	Score	Verbal Interpretation
1	2.07	Ineffective
2	2.07	Ineffective
3	2.13	Ineffective
4	2.20	Ineffective
5	2.70	Moderately Ineffective
6	2.00	Ineffective
7	2.83	Moderately Ineffective
8	2.40	Ineffective
9	1.50	Ineffective
General Mean	2.49	Ineffective

As shown in Table 3 the distribution of the mean rating of the evaluation on service reliability of the current process is Ineffective. The criterion with the lowest mean of 1.50 was the (9) Ability to satisfy over all expectation.

It may be securely concluded that the current manual system of Fire Safety Enforcement Section in BFP-NCR is Ineffective and does not conform with customer / applicant expectations.

Table 4. Comprehensive Rating for Responsiveness

Indicator No.	Score	Verbal Interpretation
1	1.53	Ineffective
2	3.27	Moderately Ineffective
3	1.53	Ineffective
4	3.43	Moderately Ineffective
5	1.43	Very Ineffective
General Mean	2.24	Ineffective



As reflected in Table 4 the distribution of the mean rating of the evaluation on the Service Responsiveness of the current process is Ineffective. The criterion with lowest mean of 1.43 was the (5) Ability to respond to customer needs.

It may be safely concluded that the current process of BFP NCR is Ineffective and does not conform with the applicant expectations.

Table 5. Comprehensive Rating for Communications

Indicator No.	Score	Verbal Interpretation
1	2.13	Ineffective
2	1.97	Ineffective
3	1.43	Very Ineffective
4	2.10	Ineffective
General Mean	1.91	Ineffective

As show in Table 5 the lowest mean of 1.43 was the (5) Ability to inform applicants as to the status of their application in a convenient manner.

The general weighted mean for all the indicators under communication of the existing process was computed as 1.91 with a verbal interpretation of Ineffective. The service communication of the BFP NCR is not capable of communication necessary information appropriately to the applicant.

Table 6. Comprehensive Rating for Tangibles

Indicator No.	Score	Verbal Interpretation
1	2.87	Moderately Ineffective
2	2.37	Ineffective
3	2.33	Ineffective
General Mean	2.52	Moderately Effective

As reflected in Table 6 the distribution of the mean rating of the evaluation on the service tangibles of the current process is moderately effective.

It may be safely concluded that service tangibles of BFP-NCR obtained weighted mean, can be treated as capable of providing at least the basic requirements of the applicant.

Table 7. Summary of the weighted mean of Service Quality of BFP-NCR

Indicator No.	Score	Verbal Interpretation
1	2.49	Ineffective
2	2.24	Ineffective
3	1.91	Ineffective
4	2.52	Moderately Effective
General Mean	2.29	Ineffective

The data reveal that the existing process of BFP-NCR, was evaluated as Ineffective given the total rate of all the criteria as 2.29.

The foregoing clearly indicates the need of new system of processing fire safety certificates application. The new system will improved the quality of service rendered by the BFP-NCR front line services section.

4. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study, it was shown that the quality of service in processing fire safety certificates, through the existing process, cannot be accentuated. Based on the evaluation of the respondents, the service quality dimension that really needs improvement was Communication. It is one of the most important dimensions which cannot be realized by the existing process. The existing process ability to inform applicants as to the status of their application in a convenient and timely manner was found to be very ineffective.

On the account of the findings of the study and the conclusions derived therefore, the recommendation of adaptation of a new process using automated system in processing application of fire safety certificates. This is highly recommended to solve the weaknesses and shortcoming of the existing process.



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