

Citizen satisfaction with the quality of local government services: systematic review 2020–2025

Satisfacción ciudadana en la calidad de servicio de gobiernos locales: revisión sistemática 2020 – 2025

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Abstract

Citizen satisfaction is a key aspect of the quality services provided by local authorities, as it shows the population how confidence and expectations are declining in local governments' ability to provide timely, quality services. This systematic review article analyzes recent scientific research on the relationship between service quality and citizen satisfaction, taking into account the perspectives and challenges faced by local governments in situations of state modernization, citizen participation, and institutional transparency. Based on a review of academic literature indexed between 2020 and 2025, empirical, methodological, and conceptual trends are identified that highlight the value of innovation in public administration, as well as the digitization of services and the implementation of policies that benefit citizens, which contribute to building legitimacy and satisfaction when evaluating the quality of public services offered by local governments, as they reflect the population's perception, expectations, and trust in government management.

Keywords: citizen satisfaction, quality of service, local governments

Resumen

La satisfacción ciudadana representa un aspecto primordial en los servicios de calidad que brindan las autoridades locales, ya que muestra a la población cómo decae la confianza y las expectativas hacia una gestión que ofrezca servicios oportunos y de calidad por parte de los gobiernos locales. Este artículo de revisión sistemática analiza la producción científica reciente acerca de la relación entre la calidad del servicio y la satisfacción ciudadana, teniendo en cuenta los puntos de vista y los retos que afrontan los gobiernos locales en situaciones de modernización estatal, participación ciudadana y transparencia institucional. Se identifican, a partir de la revisión de literatura académica indexada entre 2020 y 2025, tendencias empíricas, metodológicas y conceptuales que resaltan el valor de la innovación en la administración pública, así como la digitalización de servicios y la aplicación de políticas que benefician a la ciudadanía, las cuales contribuyen a construir legitimidad y satisfacción al evaluar la calidad de los servicios públicos ofrecidos por los gobiernos locales, dado que reflejan la percepción, expectativas y confianza de la población frente a la gestión gubernamental.

Palabras clave: satisfacción ciudadana, calidad de servicio, gobiernos locales

Introduction

Citizen satisfaction regarding the quality of services provided by local governments, particularly in relation to proximity and accessibility, is essential for the well-being of the populace. Moreover, the assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of these services has emerged as a crucial indicator of governance, with citizen satisfaction established as a key metric for evaluating the quality of public services delivered by local administrations. These entities are expected to be effective, transparent, and citizen-centric (Romero, 2024). This expectation extends beyond the mere provision of goods and services; it also encompasses the offering of improved job opportunities and efficient service delivery (Ramírez & Cárdenas, 2021).

Understanding the relationship between service quality and citizen satisfaction is vital for strengthening local governance, as it is instrumental in enhancing social satisfaction levels and the sustainability of public policies (López & Rivera, 2022). Additionally, municipal authorities play a key role in the continuous improvement of public administration, identifying perspectives, trends, and challenges faced by municipalities (Gonzales, 2023).

Internationally, various studies have examined administrative efficiency, citizen participation, institutional trust, and the use of digital tools in public services. Chan et al. (2021) in Hong Kong, China, highlight the array of services that significantly influence citizen satisfaction. Chen et al. (2021) in Taiwan demonstrate the importance of governmental responsiveness in critical situations for users. In Europe, Favero et al. (2024) and Fan and Gao (2025) in China identify essential determinants of satisfaction. Kim et al. (2024) in South Korea emphasize the link between citizen satisfaction and management shortfalls.

Research in Asia and Latin America underscores equity in service delivery and the implementation of citizen-oriented standards. In Colombia, Medina et al. (2021) assert that e-government systems bolster citizens' positive perceptions. Li and Shang (2023) in China reveal that effective e-government usage enhances trust, supported by Nie and Wang (2023), who emphasize that environmental issues directly influence citizen satisfaction. Noda (2021) in Japan argues that governmental performance fosters transparency, while Petrovsky et al. (2023) in the United Kingdom assert that public perceptions enhance management effectiveness. Pham et al. (2023) in Vietnam describe governmental credibility at 80% based on service quality.

In Latin America, factors such as administrative efficiency, transparency, and community participation directly impact citizen satisfaction. Bañuelos et al. (2023) in Mexico indicate that these elements significantly influence satisfaction levels, while Chacha et al. (2023) analyze efficiency, transparency, and local equity (Medina et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2023), advocating for policies that are accessible, reliable, and focused on problem resolution with a human touch.

In Peru, Salas and Pari (2024) demonstrated that the modernization of local digital governance enhances perceptions of efficiency and accessibility, thereby fostering citizen trust. Espinoza (2023) underscores the need for strategic service planning with a focus on outcomes and citizen experience. Astete (2024) highlights that the training, motivation, and commitment of public personnel directly affect the population; thus, officials are expected to exhibit empathy, clarity, and problem-solving orientation.

Peruvian researchers Huamaní et al. (2022) revealed that services are managed with transparency and a citizen-centric approach. Flores et al. (2023) noted that this contributes to the perception of services as more accessible and reliable. Morales et al. (2024), in open municipalities and governing frameworks, foster greater trust and satisfaction among residents, emphasizing ethical territorial development (Soto et al., 2022). In Piura, Caballero et al. (2022) stressed the significance of local governments actively listening to their citizens and tailoring services to their everyday needs. Huarcaya et al. (2024) illustrate that periodic evaluation of municipal services allows for the identification of areas needing improvement for the populace.

At the local level, citizen satisfaction within municipalities highlights the importance of governmental closeness to the community. According to Ampuero and Pari (2024), trust from residents and respect for their needs and time are paramount. Espinoza (2023) affirms that citizen involvement in decision-making contributes to continuous community enhancement. Huamaní et al. (2022) propose that municipal management should be transparent and beneficial to the population through the provision of essential services. Soto et al. (2023) emphasize the critical role of citizen participation in decisions related to territorial development. González and Soto (2022) stress that local social factors enhance the secure engagement of public policies in municipalities, evaluating and providing feedback on civic management. Huarcaya et al. (2024) demonstrate that improvements in administrative efficiency not only enhance service quality but also cultivate a respectful and close relationship with citizens through equitable and timely attention.

The government reinforces local satisfaction. Morales et al. (2024), through the implementation of transparency and citizen participation policies, promote trust and commitment among residents, who become protagonists in managing their surroundings. For Flores et al. (2023), streamlined and clear processes significantly contribute to positive perceptions of services, reducing frustration and enhancing feelings of justice and efficiency.

Thus, the primary objective is to analyze the scientific evidence published between 2020 and 2025 regarding citizen satisfaction and the quality of services offered by local administrations, seeking efficient, transparent, and participatory management that influences citizens. Three specific aims are proposed: to analyze the main determinants of municipal service quality; to describe the theoretical and methodological frameworks employed in recent research (2020-2025) on citizen satisfaction and the quality of public services; and to synthesize best practices and management strategies in local governments to enhance citizen satisfaction.

Theoretically, this research is grounded in the contributions of modern public management. According to Bovaird and Loeffler (2015), the quality of public service is constructed through collaborative processes, wherein citizens transition from being passive recipients to co-producers of public value. In this vein, Doherty et al. (2014) assert that continuous improvement in public management necessitates participatory leadership and effective communication.

Moreover, Kozuch and Sienkiewicz (2025) emphasize transforming the digital domain within the public sector to enhance the quality of local services. In this context, according to Reddick and Demir (2024), municipalities should establish technical standards that foster institutional trust and empathy among the populace. Finally, Mollah (2025) and Pérez et al. (2017) underscore that in Latin America and Asia, the quality of public service and citizen satisfaction depend significantly on institutional capacities as well as on the efficient use of digital tools and best practices in local governance.

Methodology

This research was conducted through a systematic review design, adhering to the guidelines set forth by the PRISMA 2020 method (Page et al., 2021). A basic study was implemented with a qualitative focus, applying inclusion criteria over a five-year period from 2020 to 2025. The databases utilized for article collection included Scopus, SciELO, Dialnet, and Alicia.

Table 1
Article totals by database

Database	Quantity
SCIELO	23
SCOPUS	22
DIALNET	6
ALICIA	2
Total	53

A notable diversity of contexts was observed, enriching the understanding of citizen satisfaction in public services. Peru (16 articles) emerged as the country with the highest number of publications, indicating strong interest among researchers in enhancing municipal management and citizen trust in government. Other Latin American countries, such as Ecuador (1), Mexico (4), Cuba (2), Venezuela (1), and the Netherlands (1), also share common concerns regarding service quality and citizen participation.

International research was conducted across multiple countries, including China (3), the United States (6), Vietnam (1), Denmark (1), Canada (1), Egypt (1), Spain (2), Nepal (1), Turkey (4), and the United Kingdom (6). These studies provide valuable insights into digital innovation, institutional trust, and citizen experience. Inclusion criteria were drawn from indexed databases, focusing on publications not exceeding five years (2020-2025), in English and Spanish; keyword searches utilized terms such as (citizen satisfaction OR quality of service) AND (local governments OR public management).

Table 2
Articles by country

Country	Quantity
Peru	16
United Kingdom	6
United States	6
Turkey	4
Mexico	4
China	3

Spain	2
Cuba	2
Venezuela	1
South Africa	1
Vietnam	1
Nepal	1
Ecuador	1
Netherlands	1
Vietnam	1
Egypt	1
Canada	1
Denmark	1
Total	53

The exclusion criteria applied for article selection involved: duplicate articles, publications exceeding five years, inaccessible abstracts, and those unrelated to the topic. This approach aimed to provide updated and reliable information.

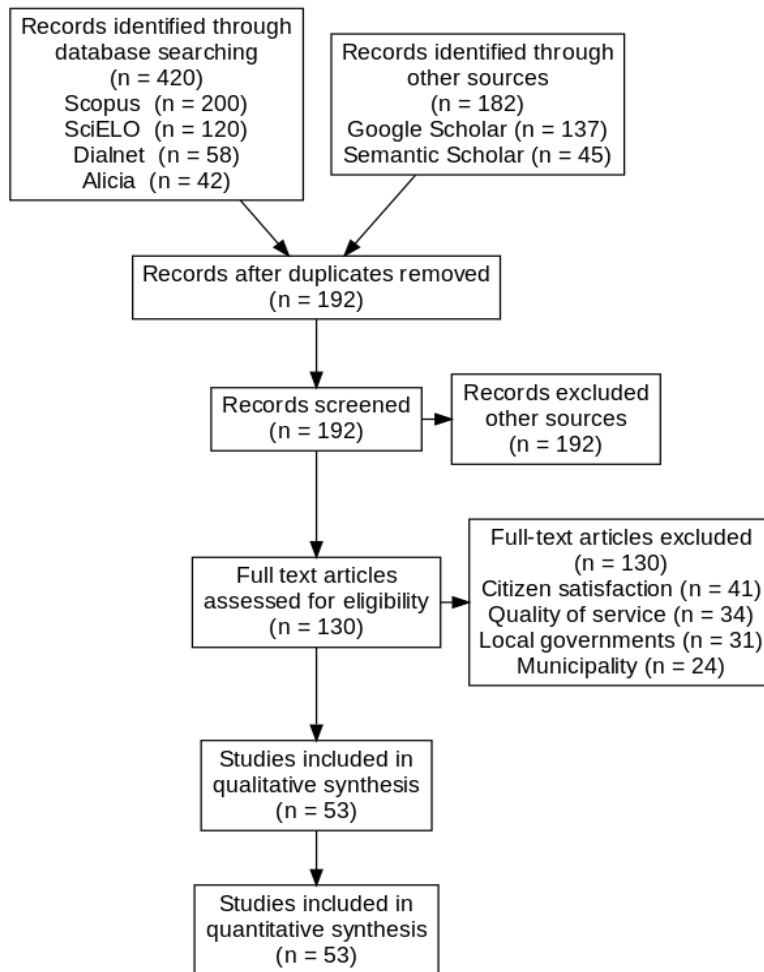
Table 3

Search strategy

Keywords	("satisfacción ciudadana" OR "satisfacción del ciudadano" OR "citizen satisfaction") AND ("Calidad de servicio" OR "quality of service" OR "service quality") AND ("gobiernos locales" OR "municipalidad" OR "local governments" OR "local government services") AND ("revisión sistemática" OR "systematic review") AND (2020 OR 2021 OR 2022 OR 2023 OR 2024)
Language	Spanish and English
Boolean operators	AND, OR, NOT
Main search sources	Google Scholar, Redalyc, Proquest

Based on *public management* principles and employing various databases such as Scopus, SciELO, Dialnet, and Alicia, information was collected from 2020 to 2025. A total of 702 similar documents were reviewed based on titles, abstracts, objectives, and other terms. Additionally, some databases with non-indexed articles were excluded: Semanthic (45), Google Scholar (137), resulting in a total of 182 articles discarded due to duplicity, lack of title similarity, age exceeding five years, etc. Ultimately, 53 studies were selected to construct an efficient research framework.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram



Results and discussion

The analysis of the literature reviewed between 2020 and 2025 revealed trends and significant findings regarding citizen satisfaction in relation to the quality of services provided by local governments. A total of 53 studies were examined, sourced from databases such as Scopus (22), SciELO (23), Dialnet (6), and Alicia (2). These studies were selected based on their relevant themes, methodological rigor, and the recency of publications.

Table 4
Articles by database and year

Year	Journals				Total
	SCIELO	SCOPUS	DIALNET	ALICIA	
2020			1		1
2021	2	7			9
2022	7	2	3	1	13
2023	4	6	2		12
2024	7	6		1	14
2025	3	1			4
Total	23	22	6	2	53

The findings indicate that citizen perception of the quality of local services is closely tied to trust in government institutions (Ampuero et al., 2024; Mendoza, 2022). Transparency in processes, efficiency in service delivery, and the reduction of bureaucracy were identified as critical variables for increasing levels of citizen satisfaction.

Satisfaction factors and management gaps reveal that citizen satisfaction largely depends on the accessibility, relevance, and timeliness of services (Rojas et al., 2023). However, significant disparities persist in rural and urban marginalized areas, where limited coverage and delays in service reduce satisfaction levels (Caballero et al., 2022). These results suggest a territorial inequality in the perception of service quality.

Innovation through digital tools in local management and citizen participation contributes to improved community engagement and strategic governance, positively impacting citizens (Martínez & Rivera, 2024). The studies emphasize that creating spaces for dialogue and incorporating user feedback in planning processes strengthen social cohesion and enhance legitimacy in local governance.

Citizen satisfaction with local governments does not solely depend on the delivery of basic services; it also hinges on how these services are managed, communicated, and evaluated. Evidence suggests that enhancing transparency, innovation, and territorial equity are decisive factors for improving citizen perceptions of service quality in local administrations. Ampuero and Pari (2024) and Bañuelos and Domínguez de la O (2023) highlight that transparent, participatory, and empathetic public management strengthens the relationship between citizens and government. Similarly, Chan, Ho, and Chau (2021) and Li and Shang (2023) demonstrate that digital transformation improves service quality, particularly when combined with personalized attention and empathy toward citizens.

Regarding the determinants of citizen satisfaction, studies concur that service quality, administrative efficiency, and institutional trust are foundational pillars shaping these perceptions. In the Peruvian context, authors like Ampuero and Pari (2024) and Astete (2024) emphasize that digital governance and a more human-centered management approach are key to enhancing citizen experience. Internationally, Fan and Gao (2025) and Yang et al. (2024) highlight the relevance of citizen participation and bidirectional communication, while García et al. (2023) in Mexico and Chacha et al. (2023) in Ecuador illustrate that proximity and municipal efficiency remain essential for bolstering public trust.

From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, most studies employ a quantitative approach, utilizing structured questionnaires to measure citizen satisfaction. However, there is a growing interest in mixed methods and systematic reviews that aim to incorporate the voice and experiences of citizens (Flores et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2024). Models like SERVQUAL and e-GOVSTAT continue to be widely used (Nawafleh, 2021; Nguyen & Uong, 2024), although new proposals, such as those by Favero et al. (2024), integrate the evolution of satisfaction over time, reflecting a more participatory and context-sensitive research approach.

In terms of best practices and strategies, notable efforts include administrative simplification, service digitization, and active citizen participation. In Peru, Caballero et al. (2022) and Huamaní et al. (2022) show that user-centered municipal attention and transparent, empathetic management enhance institutional trust. In other countries, Metwally (2024), Waheduzzaman (2025), and Oztaskin et al. (2024) agree that efficiency only makes sense when complemented by inclusion, empathy, and social sensitivity.

Overall, the evidence confirms that the quality of public service extends far beyond technical considerations; it requires listening, understanding, and acting with humanity. Contemporary public management is built on a foundation of trust, empathy, and commitment, where technology and human compassion progress hand in hand to strengthen collective well-being and sustainable community development.

Conclusions

The analysis of the 53 studies reviewed between 2020 and 2025 confirms that citizen satisfaction has become an essential element for strengthening public management. Local governments are no longer limited to providing efficient services; they strive to connect with people, foster trust, and promote well-being. True state modernization is achieved when it can listen, comprehend, and respond with sensitivity and human commitment to its community's needs.

Findings show that service quality, administrative efficiency, and institutional credibility significantly influence how citizens perceive their authorities' performance. When public attention is delivered with respect, empathy, and a sense of humanity, social trust is strengthened, and citizens become more actively engaged in local governance processes.

Similarly, the evolution of theoretical and methodological approaches reveals a significant shift in how citizen experience is studied. Contemporary research merges quantitative data with qualitative perspectives,

placing greater value on citizen voice and lived experience, thereby reflecting progress toward a more human, inclusive, and participatory governance model.

Identified best practices, such as administrative simplification, the use of accessible digital tools, and openness to citizen participation, demonstrate that technology and empathy can coexist and complement one another. Governments that promote transparency, dialogue, and closeness strengthen their relationship with the population and build a more legitimate and sustainable public management framework. In sum, humanizing public management is not just an ideal; it is an essential prerequisite for attaining quality services, fostering trusting communities, and establishing a state truly dedicated to serving its people.

Finally, the review highlights that Peru exhibits the highest concentration of recent research on citizen satisfaction and service quality within local governments, reflecting an increasing interest in enhancing public management through a human and participatory approach. The Peruvian studies analyzed (Ampuero & Pari, 2024; Astete, 2024; Caballero Marreros et al., 2022; Huamaní et al., 2022; Morales et al., 2024) converge on the notion that administrative modernization, process digitalization, and empathetic service delivery are the cornerstones determining positive citizen perception of their local government.

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