

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICES ON CONSUMERS' SATISFACTION IN AN ELECTRICITY COMPANY IN CALAMBA, LAGUNA

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ABSTRACT

The quality of individual customer service experiences can have a profound impact on consumer behavior and satisfaction. Customers' satisfaction is the basis for enhancement in service quality. This study aimed to identify the impact of the quality of customer services in a determined context of an electric company in Calamba, Laguna. The findings provided relevant information affecting customers' satisfaction and contributed insight on exploring customers' satisfaction of an electrical power distribution provider. A total of 150 customers participated in the survey for this study. Convenient sampling was used to identify the respondents. Statistical tools to analyze the data include Likert scores per SERVQUAL, mean and variance. The results show that Empathy, Assurance, and Responsiveness are expressly related to the quality of customer services, which can lead to customers' satisfaction. In addition, customers' satisfaction was found to be significantly affected by service cost. The findings of this study suggested that more empathy should be shown by management for its customers and should consider increasing the number of customer service assistants to speed up the response time.

KEYWORDS

Electric company, SERVQUAL, customers satisfaction, customer services

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Customer service is the assistance provided to customers before, during, and after the purchase of a product or service. This might entail responding to inquiries, resolving issues, or troubleshooting issues. Customers are basically everything as business wouldn't exist without them. It is essential to measure how satisfied and fulfilled customers are. Delivering prompt, friendly, and efficient service to customers and establishing long-term relationships with them are two aspects of good customer service. In the Philippines, the geographical area franchise concept is used, which requires franchise holders to connect all households and other potential customers in their franchise areas. This results in the establishment of a monopoly supplier in each franchise area (Patalinghug, 2003). Manila Electric Company (MERALCO) is a utility company distributing electricity in the Philippines for more than 115 years now (Meralco powers up, 2020). MERALCO is the largest private sector electric distribution utility company in the Philippines covering 38 cities and 73 municipalities.

Its franchise area of over 9,685 km² is just 3% of the total land area of the Philippines, but accounts for 55% of the country's electricity output (MERALCO, 2022). However, because electricity is a basic commodity in this modern world, regardless of the concerns of the consumers in the price of the electricity, consumers tend to continue availing the company's service (When the customer, 2013). Consequently, the article also mentioned that this becomes a challenge for electric companies to market their customer service resulting to an emerging move that they employ to make the consumers perspective change from profit-based relationship to partnership. Given this recent progress of customer service in electric companies, this paper investigates customer service and customer

satisfaction in an electric company, specifically MERALCO in Calamba, Laguna.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, customers' dissatisfaction with the MERALCO service was evident as issues involving erroneous billing has arisen. It is becoming an area of increasing concern in the company. This study aims to identify the impact of the customer service quality on the satisfaction of the consumers of an electric company in Calamba, Laguna. Specifically, it seeks to describe the demographic profile of Meralco customer in Calamba, Laguna. Furthermore, the study will aid in analyzing qualities of customer service that have impact on consumer satisfaction in an electric company in Calamba, Laguna.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to analyze the relationship between customer service quality on the satisfaction of the consumers of an electric company in Calamba, Laguna. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Describe the demographic profile of Meralco customers in Calamba, Laguna.
2. Estimate the customer satisfaction rating using Likert scores per SERVQUAL Dimension.
3. Determine the association between Customer Satisfaction and SERVQUAL Dimensions.

1.4 Significance of the Study

As this study aims to analyze the impact of customer service quality on the

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satisfaction of the consumers of an electric company in Calamba, Laguna, the findings may provide relevant information affecting customer satisfaction with electrical power utility company. Furthermore, the study may contribute insight on exploring customer satisfaction in electrical power distribution providers.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

Since a master list of MERALCO customers from Calamba branch is not available, probabilistic sampling is not possible. Thus, convenient sampling is employed in selecting the participants. In line with that, the study is limited to descriptive analysis instead of inferential statistical methods.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

One primary force driving the success of various business enterprises is customer care (Bennett, 1990). Customer service within service industries continues to gain in importance (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). In today's highly competitive environment, there is a growing need to provide customers with a truly memorable experience to increase both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Davis and Ding, 2014). Moreover, customers are becoming increasingly critical of the quality of service they experience (Albrecht and Zemke, 1985). According to Leonard and Sasser, quality has become a major strategic variable in the battle for market share (Leonard and Sasser, 1982).

In the current market scenario, delivering high quality and keeping customers satisfied is viewed as critical for survival. That is why these factors are high management priorities (Parasuraman, 1997; Wang et al., 2004; Olorunniwo and Hsu, 2006). Companies are interested in understanding and controlling the determinants of customer satisfaction (e.g., salesperson behavior and strategy) because the firm's long term success hinges on satisfied customers (Grewal and Sharma, 1991). Specifically, Robledo defined quality service as service that meets or exceeds customer expectations (Robledo, 2001). In this review paper, the researcher will highlight the importance of service quality and how it affects customer satisfaction.

2.2 Customer Service and Customer Service Employees

Customer service refers to the processes and actions making it easier for customers to do business with a company (Kotler, 2000). According to customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation (Turban et al., 2002). Maintaining a high level of customer service is one of the best methods of retaining current clients and attracting new ones (Goldman, 1996). A key factor that influences consumers' choice of service providers is customer service (Blodgett et al., 1995). According to Lewis and Mitchell, every time a customer comes into contact with any aspect of the organization, he/she has an opportunity to form an impression of the service provided (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). Consequently, customer service employees are becoming a key link to company success. They are the frontline employees who will create either loyal and satisfied customers or those who become so disillusioned that they never return. A primary source of customer care is the attention given by customer service employees. These individuals are ones who sell the product, resolve complaints, receive returns of merchandise, answer inquiries regarding product use, and cover requests for sundry services. (Clow et al., 1998).

2.3 Customer service quality

The service encounter is a crucial element in the customer's perception of service quality (Bitner, 1990). Levitt defines service quality as the consistency between service outcomes and the expected standards (Levitt, 1972). According to service quality has three aspects; materials, equipment and personnel. This classification implies that service quality includes not only the best outcomes, but also the methods of service delivery (Sasser et al., 1987). Fundamentally, service quality has positive

effects on customer satisfaction rate and corporate profitability (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Hence, the issue of service quality has been highly emphasized by scholars in the marketing field since the 1980s, and many scholars specializing in marketing have pointed out that providing high quality services is a critical strategy for success and survival of an organization (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Providing satisfactory services from the customers' point of view is the so-called service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

2.4 Customer satisfaction

Cardozo was the first researcher to introduce the concept of satisfaction to the field of marketing (Cardozo, 1965). Diaz and Ruiz define consumer satisfaction as "an affective reaction to an incident during the dispensing of a service" (Diaz and Ruiz, 2002). On the other hand, Kotler defines consumer satisfaction as "a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations" (Kotler, 1994). Additionally, Oliver mentioned that customer satisfaction is the difference between an individual's expectations before the consumption of a product or service and the actual experience that results from the consumption (Oliver, 1980). Conversely, overall satisfaction is said to be an effective statement about emotional reactions to the experience of products and services, which is influenced by customer satisfaction with these products and by the information used to select products (Caruana et al., 2001).

In essence, according to Hung and Chen customer satisfaction is judged by the level of delighted feelings or disappointment after comparing the perception of product features or outcomes and personal expectation towards the product (Hung and Chen, 2013). Customer satisfaction could merely be the result of a disconfirmed expectancy, or expectation and performance could exert independent influence on satisfaction (Harmon, 1997). In a service encounter, Kinna suggests there are a number of factors that influence or drive customer satisfaction and retention (Kinna, 2005). Technical factors include speed, efficiency, availability, and accuracy while interpersonal factors include courtesy, knowledge, and confidentiality, while environmental factors include both convenience and comfort.

Conclusively, customer satisfaction is quite a complex issue, and it is also responsible for customer retention and customer loyalty and hence for company's performance (Kushwaha and Agrawal, 2014). As the consumers become better educated, older, and more sophisticated, their expectations and insistence levels for customer service will continue to rise. As this occurs, even if the level of customer service provided by businesses remains constant, these rising expectations will lower the perception of this service among consumers. This makes improving the quality of customer service a necessity (Shannon, 1996). For that reason, managing and improving the quality of services, and the accompanying delivery process can be proactively used to reduce the switching and defection behaviour of customers (Helms and Mayo, 2008).

2.5 Conclusion

The quality of individual customer service experiences can have a profound impact on consumer behaviour and satisfaction. The literature review pointed out that customer satisfaction is the basis for enhancement in service quality. However, it was mentioned that both customer service and customer satisfaction are complex and entails different determinants and factors. Hence, this study would like to further investigate the specific impacts of customer service quality on customer satisfaction in a determined context, that is the context of an electric company in Calamba, Laguna.

3. METHODS

3.1 Participants

Data collected during a survey at the Meralco Calamba Business Center were used in this study. To gather individuals who paid and benefited from the service offered by MERALCO, convenient sampling was considered. The demographic breakdown of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

| Table 1: Demographic profile of participants | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Characteristics | Description |
| Gender | Male |
| | Female |
| Age | 20–29 |
| | 30–39 |
| | 40–49 |
| | 50–59 |
| | 60 and above |
| Occupation | Factory worker |
| | Sales |
| | Engineer |
| | Education Based |
| | Free Lancers |
| Monthly income (PHP) | Less than PHP 10,000 |
| | PHP 10,000 – PHP 20,000 |
| | PHP 20,000 – PHP 30,000 |
| | PHP 30,000 – PHP 40,000 |
| | PHP 40,000 – PHP 50,000 |
| Monthly Electricity Consumption (PHP) | Below PHP 1000 |
| | PHP 1000 – PHP 3000 |
| | PHP 3000 – PHP 5000 |
| | PHP 5000 – PHP 7000 |
| | PHP 7000 – PHP 9000 |

3.2 Questionnaire

The study developed and adapted surveys used to gauge MERALCO consumers' satisfaction in Calamba, Laguna. The instrument used in this study was adapted from Ong et.al (2022). The questionnaires had 12

sections: (1) Demographic Profile Information (gender, age, occupation, monthly income, and monthly electricity bill); (2) Reliability; (3) Assurance; (4) Tangibility; (5) Empathy; (6) Responsiveness; (7) Service Quality; (8) Service Cost; (9) Customer Expectation; (10) Energy Consumption; (11) Perceived Performance; and (12) Satisfaction.

| Table 2: Questionnaire. | | |
|-------------------------|------|---|
| Construct | Item | Measures |
| Reliability | RE1 | The MERALCO provides a reliable power supply. |
| | RE2 | We receive our billing statement on a regular basis. |
| | RE3 | They attend to our concerns regularly. |
| | RE 4 | Timely action in in dealing with electrical issues (e.g., long-time brownouts, damaged meters). |
| Assurance | AS1 | I trust MERALCO. |
| | AS2 | I am confident that our electrical service is safe and does not involve illegal electrical connections. |
| | AS3 | The employees of MERALCO are respectful with customers. |
| | AS4 | I believe MERALCO is assuring us through good communication. |
| Tangibility | TA1 | Our electric meter reading equipment is up to date. |
| | TA2 | We have good electrical wiring service (service cap, service drop, wiring arrangement, etc.). |
| | TA3 | The monthly billing paper is easy to read and understand. |
| | TA4 | Short time in paying my bills (waiting line/process). |
| Empathy | EM1 | We feel that MERALCO cares about us customers. |

| Table 2: Questionnaire. | | |
|-------------------------|------|--|
| Construct | Item | Measures |
| | EM2 | We see their consideration on monthly payments. |
| | EM3 | I think MERALCO considers customers' needs. |
| | EM4 | The installment payment has been well-communicated and executed. |
| Responsiveness | RS1 | We are well-informed whenever they disconnect the power supply. |
| | RS2 | The communication with their customer service is good. |
| | RS3 | They quickly attend to social safety concerns and outages. |
| | RS4 | The feedback for our payment and other inquiries and concerns is good. |
| Service Quality | SQ1 | The quality service of MERALCO is good. |
| | SQ2 | Payment methods (e.g., over-the-counter, online banking, debit/credit card, etc.) are working properly. |
| | SQ3 | I believe MERALCO is providing a good service. |
| | SQ4 | We did not experience brownouts or power outages. |
| Service Cost | SC1 | MERALCO charges at a reasonable price. |
| | SC2 | The cost of our electricity supply was fair. |
| | SC3 | We believe that we are paying at a reasonable charge with our electric bill. |
| | SC 4 | I am satisfied with the implemented convenience fee on online payment mode. |
| Customer Expectation | CE1 | My expectation for MERALCO exceeds having a good quality of service. |
| | CE2 | I am satisfied if my actual electric bill meets my expected bill. |
| | CE3 | I am expecting a good response from customer service. |
| | CE4 | I am confident that my bill has no unreasonable additional charges and that we are not being taken advantage of. |
| Energy Consumption | EC1 | I feel confident that my actual energy consumption will reflect on my bill. |
| | EC2 | I am confident that using a different appliance would not result to sudden increase in my bill. |
| | EC3 | I am confident with my electricity consumption. |
| | EC4 | The longer I use electrical appliances (electric fan, air conditioning unit, TV, computer, etc.), the more I feel satisfied. |
| Perceived Performance | PE1 | MERALCO provides efficient and effective service. |
| | PE2 | We are using the electric supply very well. |
| | PE3 | I am satisfied with their billing statement. |
| | PE4 | I agree that the no-disconnection policy implemented during the pandemic is being followed. |
| Customer Satisfaction | CS1 | Overall, I am satisfied with the service of MERALCO (electric supply, payment, customer service). |
| | CS2 | I am satisfied with the MERALCO. |
| | CS3 | I feel satisfied with the monthly bill I am receiving with MERALCO. |
| | CS4 | Overall, I can confidently say that MERALCO guarantees a transparent charge/fee in our bill. |

3.3 Data Analysis

The demographic information of the respondents will be discussed along with tables and graphs. Moreover, the Likert scores per SERVQUAL dimension was described according to the frequency percentage distribution to provide a relative measure of frequency.

The relationship between each of the SERVQUAL Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction Scores are analysed using correlation analysis. Particularly, Kendall's Tau (τ) coefficient is computed per SERVQUAL Dimension to measure the association. In line with this, the mode or majority of Likert score from questions for each SERVQUAL dimensions are used in calculating the coefficients. The Kendall's Tau coefficient with a value of (τ) suggests that the particular SERVQUAL Dimension and Customer Satisfaction Scores are not correlated. On the other hand, a positive coefficient (τ) indicates a positive monotonic/ direct linear relationship between the particular SERVQUAL Dimension and Customer

Satisfaction Scores, with a negative coefficient (τ) indicating an inverse linear relationship. Specifically, the magnitude of the coefficient is summarized in Table 3.

| Table 3: Kendall's Tau Coefficient Interpretation | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Tau τ _b | Description Kendall's |
| 0.01 to 0.09 | weak association |
| 0.10 to 0.29 | moderate association |
| 0.30 and above | strong association |

4. RESULTS

This section of the study will discuss the demographic profiles of the survey and describe the Likert scores for each of the SERVQUAL

constructs.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Overall, there are 150 customers that responded in the study. Based on the table below, there are more female respondents than male respondents. Particularly, 80 of the respondents were female (53.33%), while 70 are male.

| | Proportion | Magnitude |
|--------|------------|-----------|
| Female | 53.33% | 80 |
| Male | 46.67% | 70 |

In terms of age, most of the respondents were categorized under the 30-39 age group, followed by the 20-29 age group, 40-49 age group, and 50-59 age group as the least frequent age group (Table 5). Specifically, age

groups 30-39 and 20-29 shows more significant number of respondents covering 46.67% and 41.33%, respectively.

| Age Groups | Proportion | Magnitude |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| Age 30-39 | 46.67% | 70 |
| Age 20-29 | 41.33% | 62 |
| Age 40-49 | 10% | 15 |
| Age 50-59 | 2% | 3 |

As illustrated in Figure 1, most of the respondents works as Customer Care Representative covering 21.95% of all the respondents, which was followed by Engineers accounting to 9.76% of the respondents. Also, occupations such as USRN, Relations Officer, IT, HR, Fleet Administrator, Driver, Data Analyst, and Bills payment personnel each covers 2.44% of the whole survey respondents.

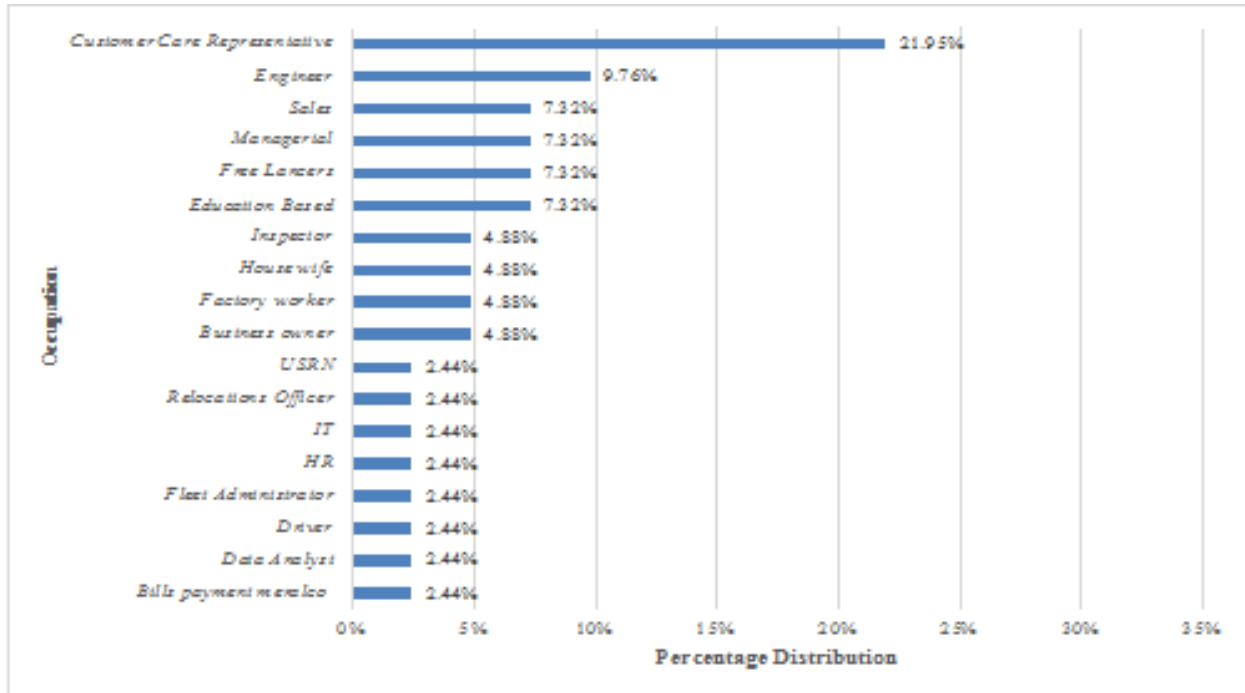


Figure 1: Occupation Distribution of the Survey Respondents

Based on income classification groups, most of the respondents earn about 10,000 to 20,000 pesos and 20,000 to 30,000 pesos. These income groups cover 31.71% and 29.27% of the survey respondents, respectively.

Meanwhile, the minority income classification group was revealed to be those that are earning 40,000 to 50,000 pesos monthly (Figure 2).

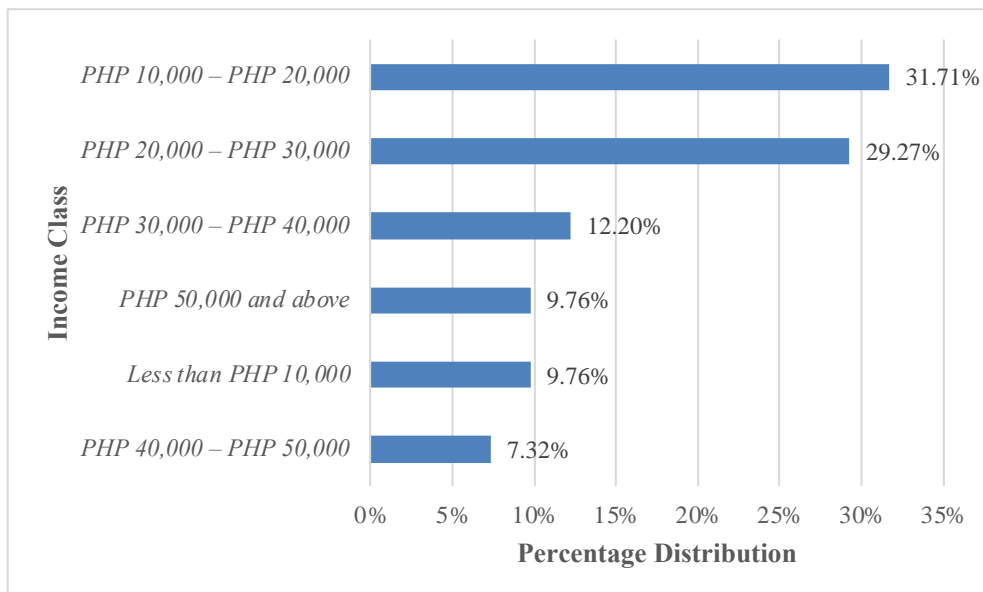


Figure 2: Income Class Distribution of the Survey Respondents

Considering the barangay coverage of the survey, only 22 out of the 54 barangays in Calamba City was represented by the study. Specifically, the barangays where recorded were the following: *Barangay I, Barangay II, Barangay III, Barangay VI, Barangay Bagong Kalsada, Barangay Banlic, Barangay Bucal, Barangay Buro, Barangay Halang, Barangay Hornalan, Barangay La Mesa, Barangay San Jose, Barangay Sirang Lupa, Barangay*

Bañadero, Barangay Canlubang, Barangay Laguerta, Barangay Looc, Barangay Makiling, Barangay Pansol, Barangay Barandal, Barangay Parian, Barangay Palo-Alto, and Barangay Real. In line with this, Figure 3 reveals that Barangay Real had the greatest number of respondents covering 12.20% of the whole respondents, followed by Barangay Palo-Alto that covers 9.76%.

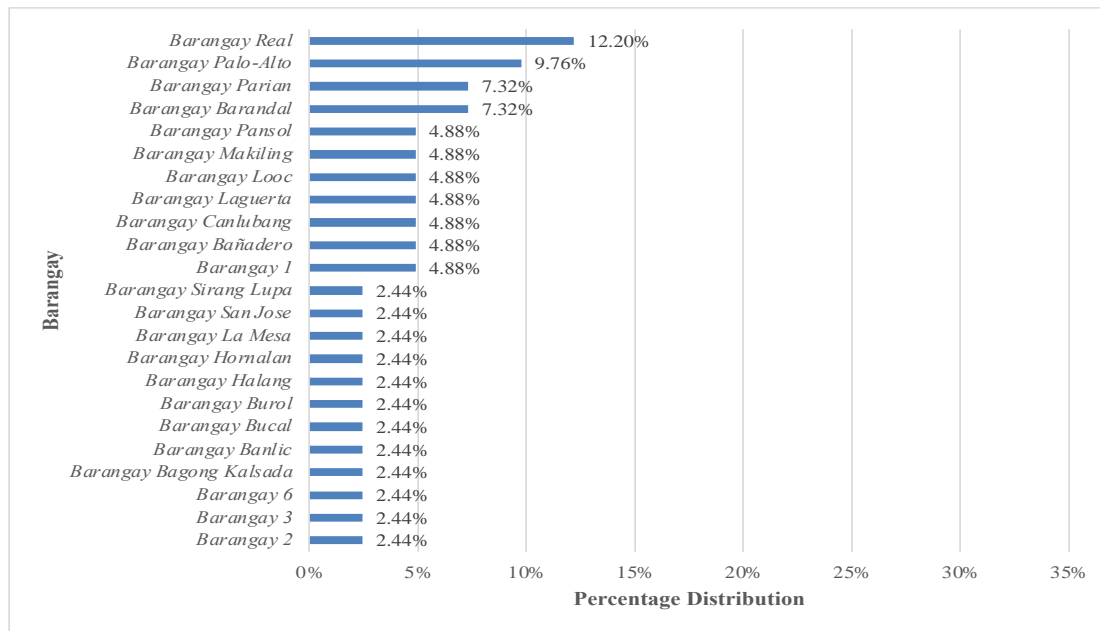


Figure 3: Barangay Coverage Distribution of the Survey Respondents

Further, Figure 4 shows that more than half of the respondents consumes 1,000 to 3,000 pesos worth of electricity on a monthly basis (63.41%).

While, only 2.44% of the respondents consumes 7,000 to 9,000 worth of electricity.

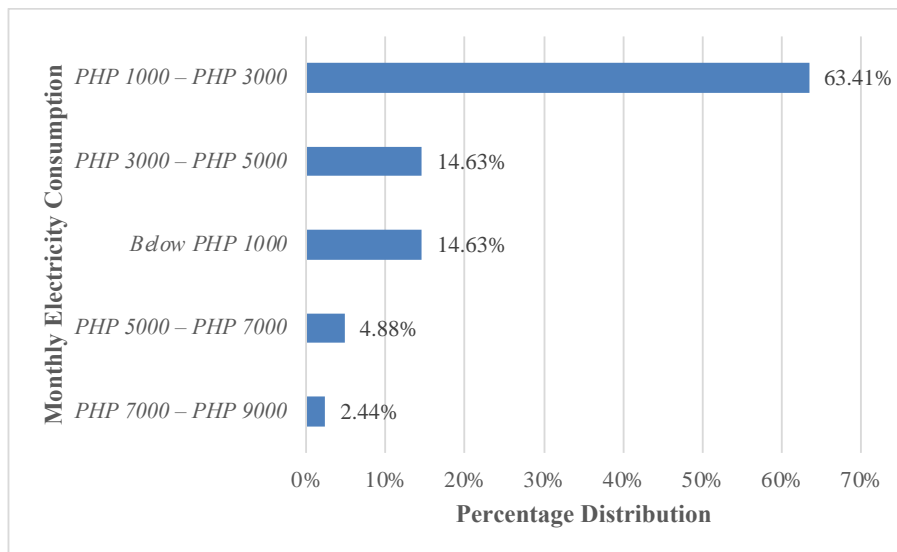


Figure 4: Monthly Electricity Consumption Distribution of the Survey Respondents

4.2 Dimensions of SERVQUAL

In estimating the customer satisfaction, the study adapted a 5-score Likert questionnaires that is aggregated by the following constructs: (1) Demographic Profile Information (gender, age, occupation, monthly income, and monthly electricity bill); (2) Reliability; (3) Assurance; (4) Tangibility; (5) Empathy; (6) Responsiveness; (7) Service Quality; (8) Service Cost; (9) Customer Expectation; (10) Energy Consumption; (11) Perceived Performance; and (12) Satisfaction. In addition, 4 questions are asked for each of the SERVQUAL components. The customer satisfaction scores used in the questionnaires follows an ascending order, on which the scores correspond to (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

4.2.1 Reliability

The Reliability construct refers to the reliability of services offered in the customer care of MERALCO Calamba. This construct made use of the

following questions: (RE1) The MERALCO provides a reliable power supply, (RE2) We receive our billing statement on a regular basis, (RE3) They attend to our concerns regularly, (RE4) Timely action in in dealing with electrical issues (e.g., long-time brownouts, damaged meters). Figure 5 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the reliability related questions. The percentage distribution below suggests that more than half (51%) of the respondents were strongly agrees in the reliability of the power supplied by MERALCO (RE1), while 15% and 2% accounts to the respondents that are Neutral and Strongly Disagree, respectively.

Likewise, 56% of the respondents strongly agrees that the electric bills are received on a regular basis (RE2), while 2% of the respondents had opposing rating. In terms of having regularly attended concerns (RE3), 46% of the respondents are strongly agreed, 7% neither agrees or disagree in having attended concerns, while 2% strongly disagrees and considers their concerns as neglected. Meanwhile, only 34% of the respondents agrees and strongly agrees to the statement that actions

dealing with electrical issues are timely (RE4). To summarize, most of the customers agreed to the positive statements regarding the reliability of customer service in MERALCO Calamba. However, a small decline in the

percentage of strongly agreed respondents are observed in terms of the timeliness of actions in dealing with electrical issues.

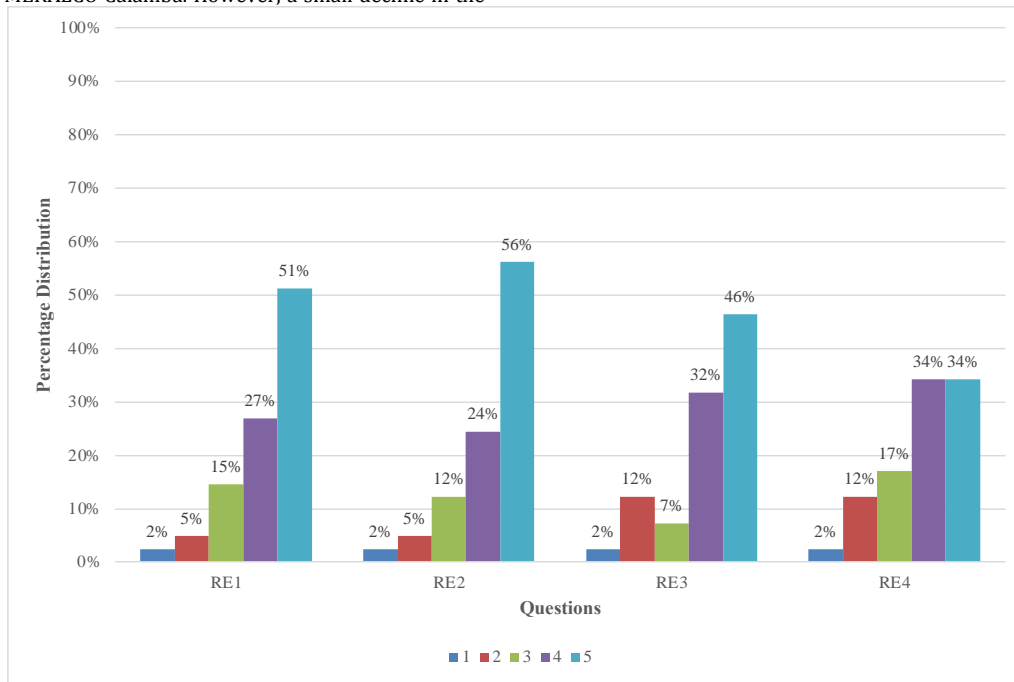


Figure 5: Likert Score Distribution by Reliability related Questions

4.2.2 Assurance

The Assurance construct refers to the assurance of services offered in the customer care of MERALCO Calamba. This construct made use of the following questions: (AS1) I trust MERALCO. (AS2) I am confident that our electrical service is safe and does not involve illegal electrical connections., (AS3) The employees of MERALCO are respectful with customers, (AS4) I believe MERALCO is assuring us through good communication. Figure 6 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the assurance related questions. Trust in MERALCO (AS1): The findings indicates that 54% of the respondents strongly agree and trust MERALCO, while 17% are neutral, and 5% strongly disagree. This suggests that a majority of the respondents have a positive perception of trust towards MERALCO. Confidence in electrical service safety (AS2): The findings mentions that 59% of the respondents strongly agree that they are confident in the safety of MERALCO's electrical service, with 2% holding an opposing rating.

This indicates a positive perception of the electrical service's safety among the majority of respondents. Employee respect towards customers (AS3): The findings states that 59% of the respondents strongly agree that MERALCO employees are respectful towards customers. Additionally, 10% neither agree nor disagree, and 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of respondents have a positive perception of employee behavior, although there are some mixed opinions. Assuring through good communication (AS4): Only 51% of the respondents strongly agree and believe that MERALCO is assuring them through good communication. This indicates a slight decline in the percentage of strongly agreed respondents compared to the other assurance-related statements. Overall, the findings concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding the assurance provided by MERALCO Calamba. However, it also notes a small decline in the percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with the assurance related to confidence and trust in MERALCO's service.

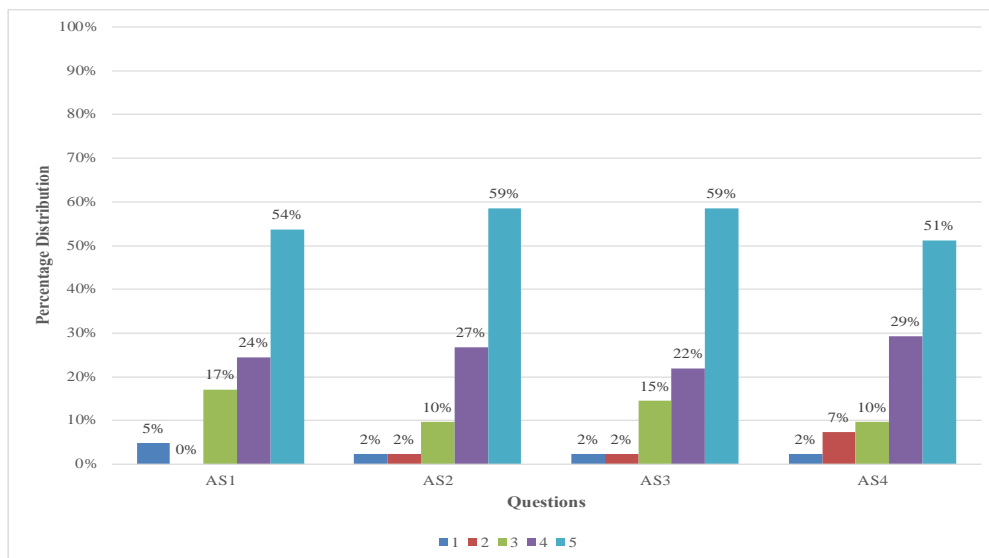


Figure 6: Likert Score Distribution by Assurance related Questions

4.2.3 Tangibility

The Tangibility construct refers to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and communication materials offered by MERALCO Calamba. This construct made use of the following questions: (TA1) Our electric

meter reading equipment is up to date, (TA2) We have good electrical wiring service (service cap, service drop, wiring arrangement, etc.), (TA3) The monthly billing paper is easy to read and understand, (TA4) Short time in paying my bills (waiting line/process). Figure 7 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the

tangibility related questions. According to the findings, 46% of the respondents strongly agree that the electric meter reading equipment is up to date (TA1), while 12% are neutral, and 5% strongly disagree. Similarly, 46% of the respondents strongly agree that they have good electrical wiring service (TA2), with 2% opposing the rating.

Regarding the ease of reading and understanding the monthly billing paper (TA3), 59% of the respondents strongly agree, 5% are neutral, and strongly disagree. Finally, 41% of the respondents strongly agree that they

have a short time in paying bills (TA4). The findings concludes by summarizing that most customers agreed with the positive statements about the tangibility provided by MERALCO Calamba. However, it also mentions a slight reduction in the number of respondents who strongly agreed with the statements about meter reading and the ease of understanding the monthly billing statement. Based on this assessment, the statement provides information about the respondents' perceptions and satisfaction levels regarding the tangibility aspect of MERALCO Calamba's services.

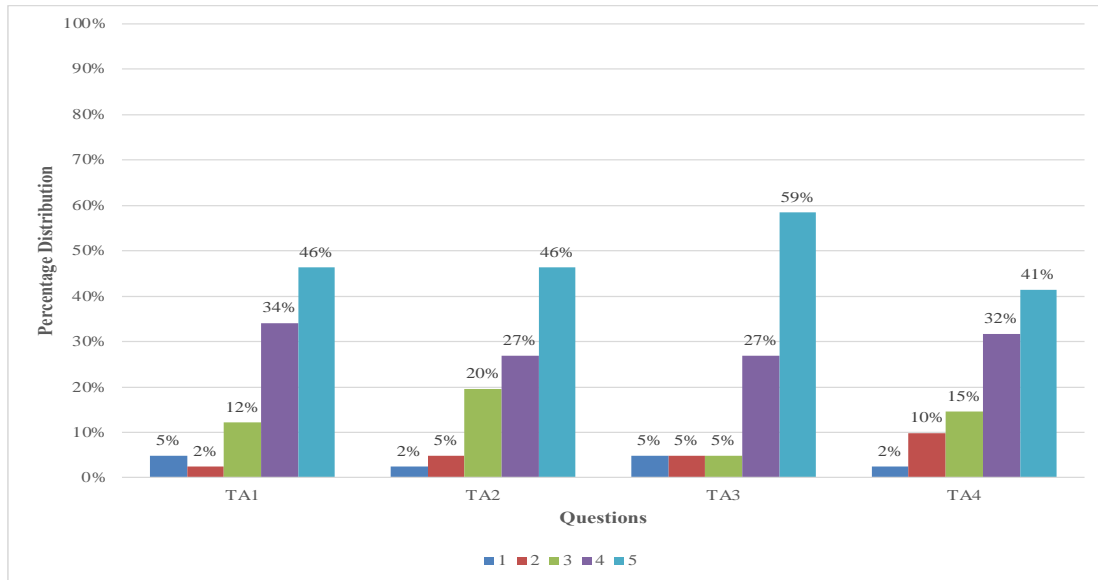


Figure 7: Likert Score Distribution by Tangibility related Questions

4.2.4 Empathy

The Empathy construct refers to the caring, individualized attention the MERALCO Calamba provides its customers. This construct made use of the following questions: (EM1) We feel that MERALCO cares about us customers , (EM2) We see their consideration on monthly payments, (EM3) I think MERALCO considers customers' needs, (EM4) The installment payment has been well-communicated and executed. Figure 8 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the empathy related questions. MERALCO caring about customers (EM1): The findings indicates that less than half (37%) of the respondents strongly agree and feel that MERALCO cares about customers. Additionally, 12% are neutral, and 5% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of MERALCO's care towards customers, but there are mixed opinions. Consideration on monthly payments (EM2): The findings mentions that 44% of the respondents strongly agree that they see MERALCO's consideration on monthly payments, with 7% holding an

opposing rating. This indicates a positive perception of MERALCO's consideration in terms of monthly payments among a substantial proportion of respondents. MERALCO considering customers' needs (EM3): The findings states that 46% of the respondents strongly agree that MERALCO considers customers' needs. Additionally, 15% neither agree nor disagree, and 7% strongly disagree. This suggests that a majority of the respondents have a positive perception of MERALCO's consideration for customers' needs, although there are some mixed opinions. Well-communicated and executed installment payment (EM4): Only 46% of the respondents strongly agree that the installment payment has been well-communicated and executed, according to the findings. This indicates a lower percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with this aspect of empathy compared to the other statements. Overall, the findings concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding the empathy provided by MERALCO Calamba. However, it notes a slight decrease in the number of respondents who strongly think that MERALCO gives consideration to customers when it comes to paying their monthly payments.

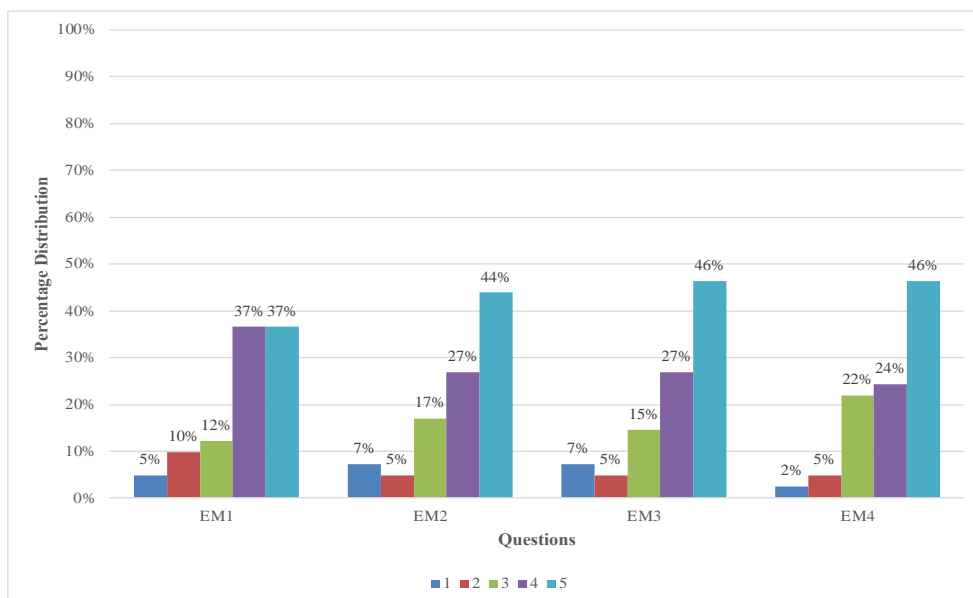


Figure 8: Likert Score Distribution by Empathy related Questions

4.2.5 Responsiveness

The Responsiveness construct refers to the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service MERALCO Calamba provides its customers. This construct made use of the following questions: (RS1) We are well-informed whenever they disconnect the power supply, (RS2) The communication with their customer service is good, (RS3) They quickly attend to social safety concerns and outages, (RS4) The feedback for our payment and other inquiries and concerns is good. Figure 9 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the empathy related questions. Being well-informed about power supply disconnections (RS1): The findings indicates that less than half (37%) of the respondents strongly agree that they are well-informed whenever MERALCO disconnects the power supply. Additionally, 12% are neutral, and 5% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of being well-informed, but there are mixed opinions. Communication with customer service (RS2): The findings mentions that 37% of the respondents strongly agree that the communication with MERALCO's customer service is good,

with 2% holding an opposing rating. This indicates a positive perception of the communication with customer service among a substantial proportion of respondents. Quick attendance to social safety concerns and outages (RS3): The findings states that 41% of the respondents strongly agree that MERALCO quickly attends to social safety concerns and outages. Additionally, 10% neither agree nor disagree, and 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a majority of the respondents have a positive perception of MERALCO's responsiveness to safety concerns and outages, although there are some mixed opinions. Feedback for payment and inquiries (RS4): Only 39% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that the feedback for their payment and other inquiries and concerns is good, according to the findings. This indicates a lower percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with this aspect of responsiveness compared to the other statements. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding the responsiveness provided by MERALCO Calamba. However, it notes a slight decrease in the number of respondents who strongly think that MERALCO quickly attends to customers' concerns.

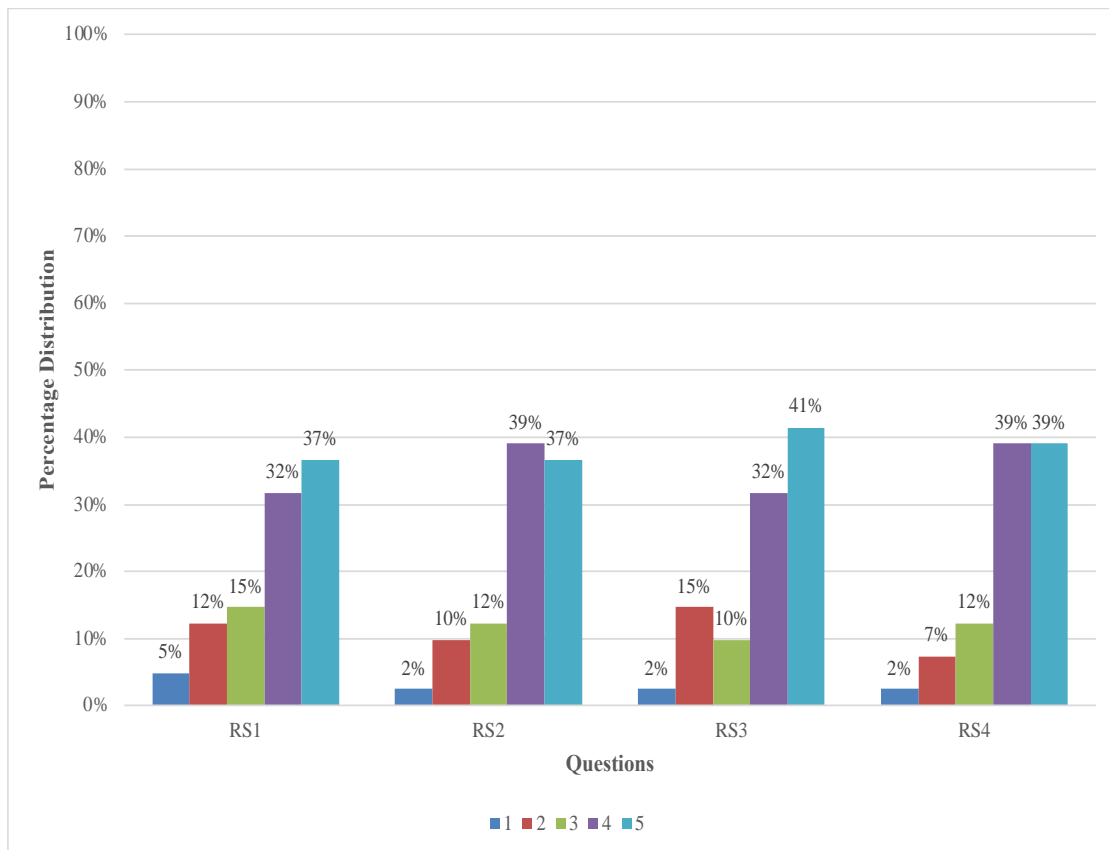


Figure 9: Likert Score Distribution by Responsiveness related Questions

4.2.6 Service Quality

The Service Quality construct refers to a measure of how MERALCO Calamba understands its customer's needs and fulfils their expectations. This construct made use of the following questions: (SQ1) The quality service of MERALCO is good, (SQ2) Payment methods (e.g., over-the-counter, online banking, debit/credit card, etc.) are working properly, (SQ3) I believe MERALCO is providing a good service, (SQ4) We did not experience brownouts or power outages. Figure 10 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the empathy related questions. Quality service of MERALCO (SQ1): The findings indicates that 37% of the respondents strongly agree and 44% agree that the quality service of MERALCO is good. Additionally, 17% are neutral, and 5% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of the service quality, but there are mixed opinions. Proper functioning of payment methods (SQ2): The findings mentions that more than half (54%) of the respondents strongly agree that payment methods, such as over-the-counter, online banking,

debit/credit card, are working properly. Only 2% of the respondents had an opposing rating.

This indicates a positive perception of the functioning of payment methods among a majority of the respondents. MERALCO providing good service (SQ3): The findings states that 46% of the respondents strongly agree that MERALCO is providing a good service, while 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of MERALCO's service quality. Experience of brownouts or power outages (SQ4): Only 29% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they did not experience brownouts or power outages, according to the findings. Additionally, 5% strongly disagree and 24% disagree. This indicates that a notable proportion of the respondents experienced power outages, which may affect their perception of service quality. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding the service quality provided by MERALCO Calamba. However, it highlights the fact that some customers experienced power outages, which may impact their perception of service quality.

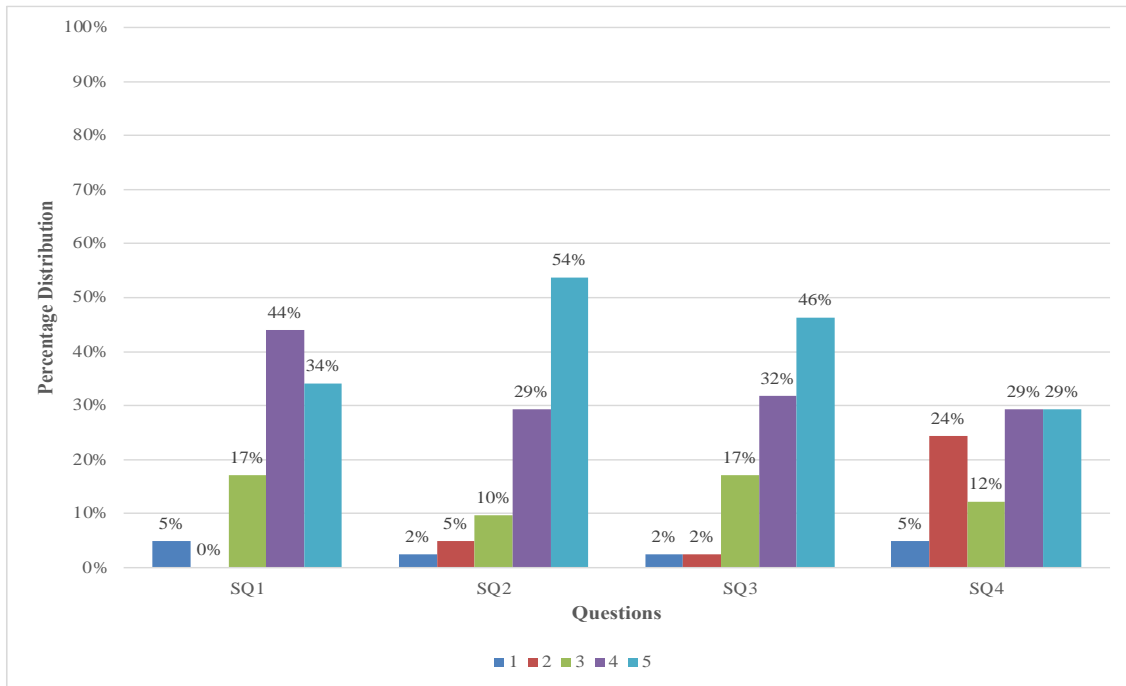


Figure 10: Likert Score Distribution by Service Quality related Questions

4.2.7 Service Cost

The Service cost construct refers to the cost of services offered by MERALCO Calamba. This construct made use of the following questions: (SC1) MERALCO charges at a reasonable price, (SC2) The cost of our electricity supply was fair (SC3) We believe that we are paying at a reasonable charge with our electric bill, (SC4) I am satisfied with the implemented convenience fee on online payment mode. Figure 11 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the empathy related questions. Reasonable price charged by MERALCO (SC1): The findings indicates that 29% of the respondents strongly agree that MERALCO charges at a reasonable price. Additionally, 22% are neutral, and 12% strongly disagree. This suggests that the respondents' significant proportion of have a mixed opinion about the reasonableness of the price charged by MERALCO. Fair cost of electricity supply (SC2): The findings mentions that 32% of the respondents strongly agree that the cost of electricity supply was fair, while 10% of the respondents had an

opposing rating. This indicates a positive perception of the fairness of the cost of electricity supply among a substantial proportion of respondents. Reasonable charge with electric bill (SC3): The findings states that 32% of the respondents strongly agree that they believe they are paying at a reasonable charge with their electric bill. Additionally, 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of the reasonable charge with their electric bill. Satisfaction with convenience fee on online payment (SC4): Only 44% of the respondents strongly agree that they are satisfied with the implemented convenience fee on online payment mode, according to the findings. This indicates a lower percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with this aspect of service cost compared to the other statements. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding the service cost provided by MERALCO Calamba. However, it highlights an evident decline in the percentage of strongly agreed respondents when it comes to perceiving MERALCO as having a reasonable charge or price.

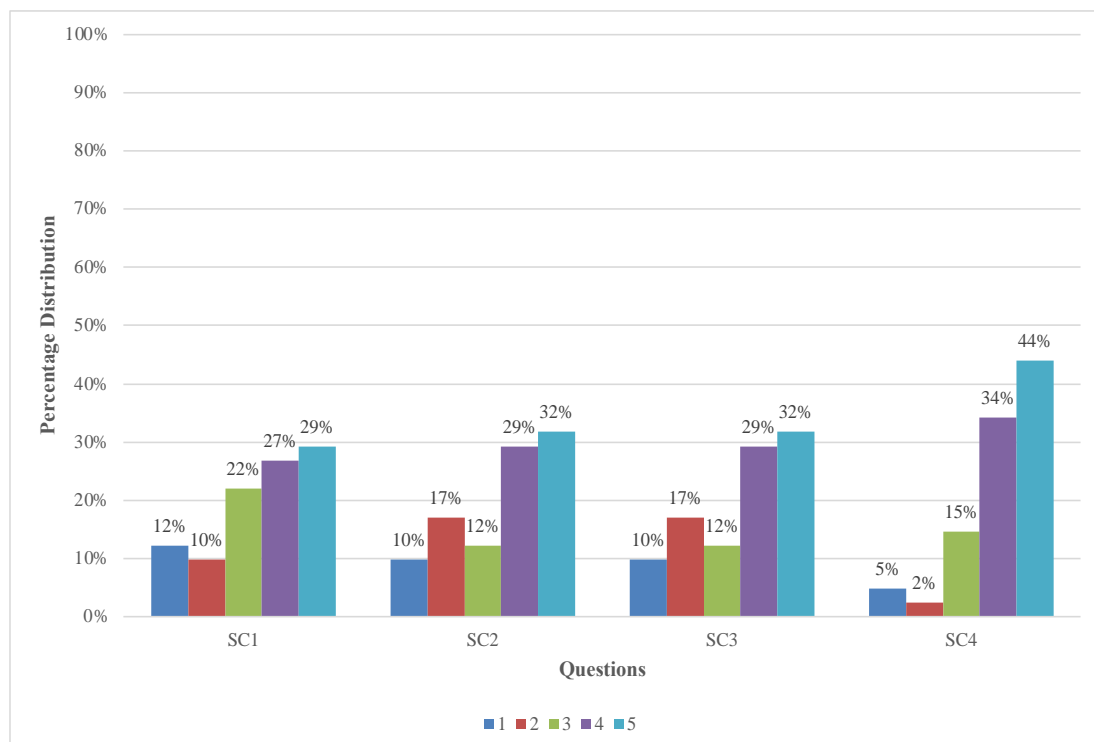


Figure 11: Likert Score Distribution by Service Cost related Questions

4.2.8 Customer Expectation

The Customer Expectation construct refers to the expectation of customers for MERALCO Calamba. This construct made use of the following questions: (CE1) My expectation for MERALCO exceeds having a good quality of service, (CE2) I am satisfied if my actual electric bill meets my expected bill (CE3) I am expecting a good response from customer service, (CE4) I am confident that my bill has no unreasonable additional charges and that we are not being taken advantage of Figure 12 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the reliability related questions. Exceeding expectation for good quality of service (CE1): The findings indicates that 41% of the respondents strongly agree that their expectation for MERALCO exceeds having a good quality of service. Additionally, 17% are neutral, and 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have high expectations beyond just good quality service. Satisfaction if actual electric bill meets expected bill (CE2): The findings mentions that 41% of the respondents strongly agree that they are satisfied if their actual electric bill meets their expected bill, with 5% of the respondents holding an

opposing rating. This indicates a positive perception of satisfaction when expectations align with the actual bill among a substantial proportion of respondents. Expecting a good response from customer service (CE3): More than half (51%) of the respondents strongly agree that they expect a good response from customer service. Additionally, 12% neither agree nor disagree when it comes to having their concerns attended, while 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a majority of the respondents have high expectations for good customer service response, although there are mixed opinions about having concerns attended. Confidence in bill having no unreasonable additional charges (CE4): 44% of the respondents strongly agree that they are confident their bill has no unreasonable additional charges and that they are not being taken advantage of, according to the statement. This indicates a positive perception of confidence in bill accuracy and fair charges among a significant proportion of respondents. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding customer expectations. However, it highlights a slight decline in the percentage of strongly agreed respondents when it comes to having confidence in the absence of unreasonable additional charges on their bills.

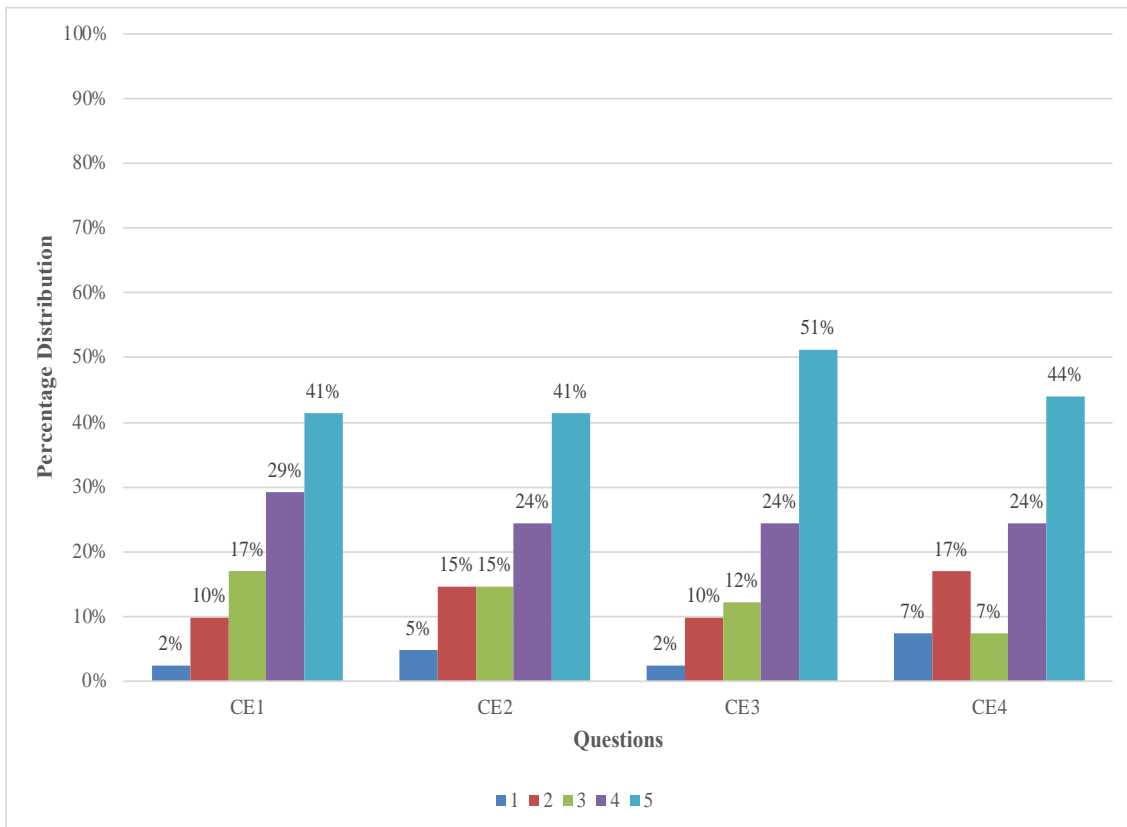


Figure 12: Likert Score Distribution by Customer Expectation related Questions

4.2.9 Energy Consumption

The Energy Consumption construct refers to energy consumption MERALCO Calamba reflects and billed to its customers. This construct made use of the following questions: (EC1) I feel confident that my actual energy consumption will reflect on my bill, (EC2) I am confident that using a different appliance would not result to sudden increase in my bill, (EC3) I am confident with my electricity consumption, (EC4) The longer I use electrical appliances (electric fan, air conditioning unit, TV, computer, etc.), the more I feel satisfied. Figure 13 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the empathy related questions. Confidence in actual energy consumption reflecting on the bill (EC1): The findings indicates that less than half (32%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that their actual energy consumption reflects on their bill. Additionally, 20% are neutral, and 7% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have mixed opinions about their confidence in the correlation between energy consumption and billing. Confidence that using a different appliance won't result in sudden bill increase (EC2): The findings mentions that 37% of the

respondents strongly agree that using a different appliance would not result in a sudden increase in their bill, while 5% of the respondents had an opposing rating. This indicates a positive perception of confidence in appliance usage not significantly impacting the bill among a substantial proportion of respondents. Confidence in electricity consumption (EC3): 39% of the respondents strongly agree that they are confident in their electricity consumption. Additionally, 20% neither agree nor disagree, while 7% strongly disagree and disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of confidence in their electricity consumption, although there are mixed opinions. Satisfaction with longer use of electrical appliances (EC4): Only 34% of the respondents strongly agree and agree that the longer they use their electrical appliances, the more they feel satisfied. This indicates a lower percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with this aspect of energy consumption compared to the other statements. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding energy consumption. However, it highlights a slight decline in the percentage of strongly agreed respondents when it comes to their confidence in the energy consumption reflected on their bill.

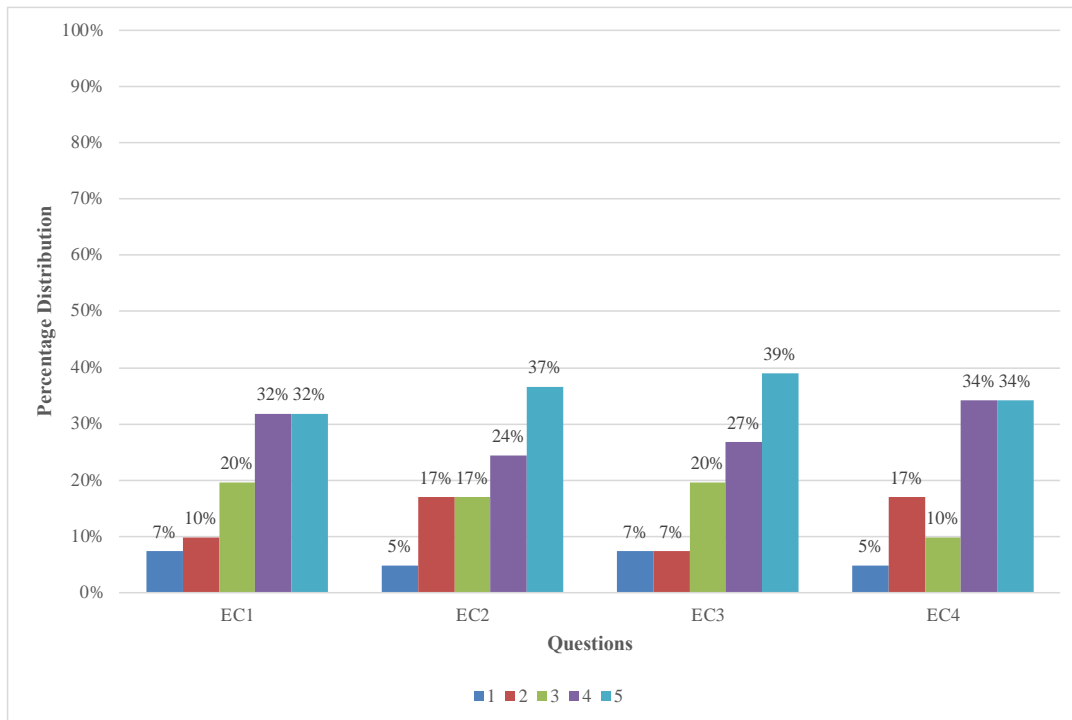


Figure 13: Likert Score Distribution by Electric Consumption related Questions

4.2.10 Perceived Performance

The Perceived Performance construct refers to performance positively affects by Service Quality. This construct made use of the following questions: (PE1) MERALCO provides efficient and effective service, (PE2) We are using the electric supply very well, (PE3) I am satisfied with their billing statement, (PE4) I agree that the no-disconnection policy implemented during the pandemic is being followed. Figure 14 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the perceived performance related questions. Efficient and effective service provided by MERALCO (PE1): The findings indicates that more than half (51%) of the respondents strongly agree that MERALCO provides efficient and effective service. Additionally, 15% are neutral, and 2% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of MERALCO's service being efficient and effective. Effective utilization of electric supply (PE2): The findings mentions that 51% of the respondents strongly agree that they are using the electric supply very well. Only 2% of the respondents had an

opposing rating. This indicates a positive perception of effective utilization of electric supply among a substantial proportion of respondents. Satisfaction with billing statement (PE3): 44% of the respondents strongly agree that they are satisfied with their billing statement, according to the statement. Additionally, 5% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of satisfaction with their billing statement. Following the no-disconnection policy during the pandemic (PE4): More than half (56%) of the respondents strongly agree that the no-disconnection policy implemented during the pandemic is being followed. This indicates a positive perception of adherence to the no-disconnection policy among a majority of respondents. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding the perceived performance of MERALCO Calamba. It suggests that customers have a positive perception of efficient and effective service, effective utilization of electric supply, satisfaction with billing statement, and adherence to the no-disconnection policy during the pandemic.

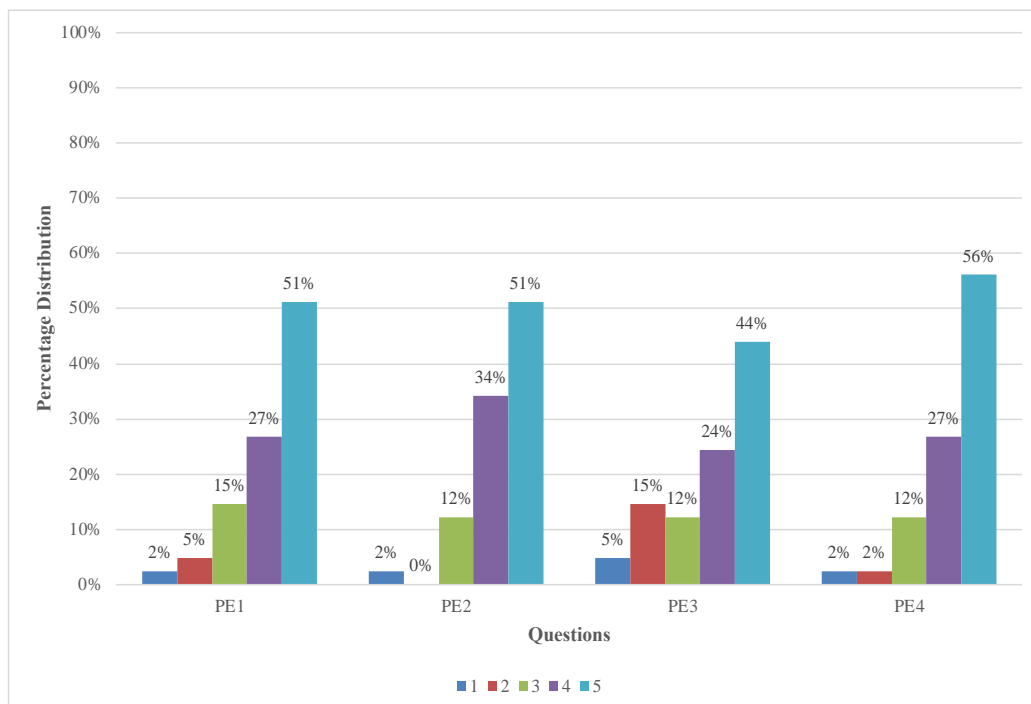


Figure 14: Likert Score Distribution by Perceived Performance related Questions

4.2.11 Customer Satisfaction

This construct made use of the following questions: (CS1) Overall, I am satisfied with the service of MERALCO (electric supply, payment, customer service), (CS2) I am satisfied with the MERALCO (CS3) I feel satisfied with the monthly bill I am receiving with MERALCO, (SC4) Overall, I can confidently say that MERALCO guarantees a transparent charge/fee in our bill .Figure 15 below illustrates the customer satisfaction rating that the respondents provided in the empathy related questions. Overall satisfaction with the service of MERALCO (CS1): The findings indicates that 46% of the respondents strongly agree that they are satisfied with the service of MERALCO, which includes electric supply, payment, and customer service. Additionally, 17% are neutral, and 5% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of overall satisfaction with the service provided by MERALCO. Satisfaction with MERALCO (CS2): The findings mentions that 46% of the respondents strongly agree that they are satisfied with MERALCO. Only 5% of the respondents had an opposing rating. This

indicates a positive perception of satisfaction with MERALCO among a substantial proportion of respondents. Satisfaction with the monthly bill received (CS3): 46% of the respondents strongly agree that they feel satisfied with the monthly bill they receive from MERALCO, according to the statement. Additionally, 7% strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have a positive perception of satisfaction with their monthly bill. Confidence in MERALCO guaranteeing transparent charge/fee (CS4): Only 46% of the respondents strongly agree that they can confidently say that MERALCO guarantees a transparent charge/fee in their bill (Wu et al., 2015; Ocampo et al., 2017). This indicates a lower percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with this aspect of customer satisfaction compared to the other statements. Overall, the statement concludes that most customers agreed with the positive statements regarding customer satisfaction with the service provided by MERALCO Calamba. It suggests that customers have a positive perception of overall satisfaction, satisfaction with MERALCO, satisfaction with the monthly bill, although there is room for improvement in terms of confidence in transparent charges/fees (Nambisan et al., 2016).

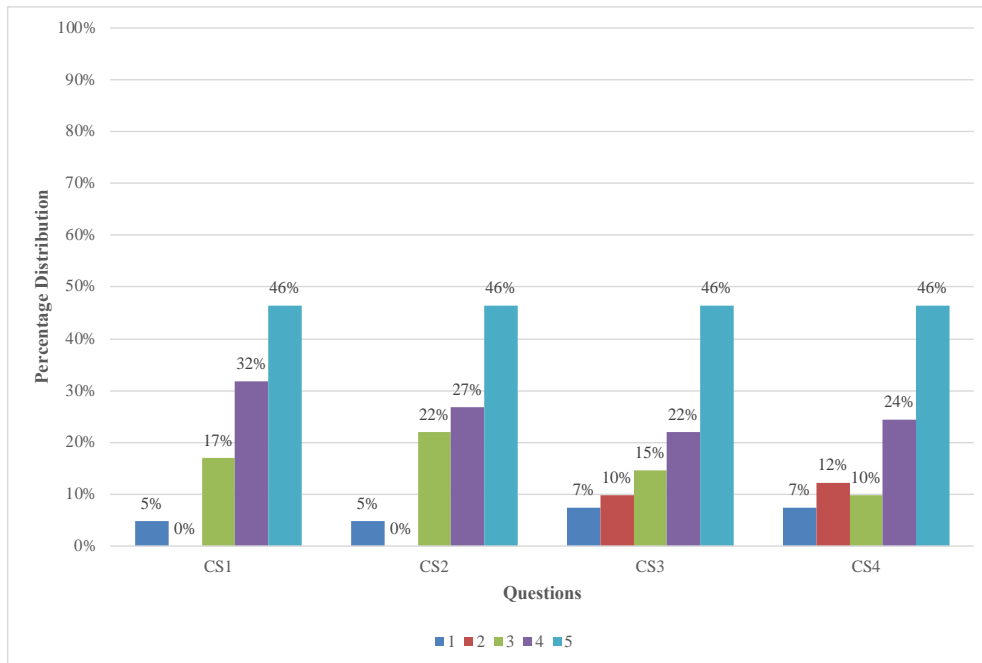


Figure 15: Likert Score Distribution by Customer Satisfaction related Questions

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The summary of Kendall’s Tau coefficient between the mode of each SERVQUAL Dimensions and mode of Customer Satisfaction Scores are summarized in Table 6. The tables reveals that all the coefficients have a positive sign and a relatively high values suggesting that all the SERVQUAL Dimensions are associated with the Customer Satisfaction Scores. Therefore, a positive monotonic/ linear trend is observed in the relationship of Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness, Service Quality, Customer Expectation, Energy Consumption, and Perceived Performance towards the Customer Satisfaction Scores (Bahadur et al., 2018; PhilStar Global, 2021; Fiorio and Fiorio, 2011).

| Table 6: Summary of Kendall’s Tau Coefficient of each SERVQUAL Dimensions in relation to most Customer Satisfaction Scores | |
|--|---------------|
| | Kendall’s Tau |
| Reliability | 0.6531 |
| Assurance | 0.7945 |
| Tangibility | 0.5927 |
| Empathy | 0.8101 |
| Responsiveness | 0.7586 |
| Service Quality | 0.8673 |
| Service Cost | 0.7427 |
| Customer Expectation | 0.7255 |
| Energy Consumption | 0.7761 |
| Perceived Performance | 0.7395 |

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated customer satisfaction with MERALCO using SERVQUAL dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness). The results show that Empathy, Assurance and Responsiveness are expressly related to the quality of customer services, which can lead to customers’ satisfaction. Results showed that Empathy positively affects customer satisfaction (0.8101). Empathy refers to the service providers go an extra mile to make the customer feel special and valued during the interaction. Indicators showed that thoughtfulness, care, attention to questions, and clear payment instructions were important aspects of service quality. Even when Meralco customers were unable to pay for their monthly bills, which piled up to three or four months, the company continued to keep their lights on. The moves taken by MERALCO, which took into consideration, the "No Disconnection Policy," also seen reflecting these conclusions. The Manila Electric Co. (Meralco)’s no disconnection policy continued as the government extended the modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) in the National Capital Region as well as in the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal until mid-May.

Moreover, assurance positively affected customer satisfaction (0.7945). A group researchers elaborates that employee skills and competencies help to inspire trust and confidence in the customer, which in turn stirs feelings of safety and comfort in the process of service delivery. MERALCO works from dusk to dawn, assuring safe and uninterrupted electric service. Customer’s safety remains a top priority, as MERALCO continue to power efforts during the pandemic. These actions by MERALCO assures customer of the safe, reliable service and affects customers’ trust with MERALCO.

Furthermore, under SERVQUAL, the result shows that responsiveness

positively relates to customer satisfaction (0.7586). In a study, stated that responsiveness is one of the service industry's most important factors or dimensions. Responsiveness requires minimizing the waiting duration for all interactions between the customer and the service provider. Having an early announcement or providing information, effective communication, and prompt report response were examples of service quality indicators. In addition, customers' satisfaction was found to be significantly affected by service cost. The question (SC1) MERALCO charges at a reasonable price has the lowest strongly agreed (29%) percentage distribution and highest strongly disagreed (12%) percentage distribution. Fiorio and Fiorio states that the price of service may affect consumer behavior. Overall, service quality had the highest coefficient to customer satisfaction (0.8673). Service quality perceptions are positively linked with customer satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study's findings, it is evident that customer satisfaction with MERALCO is influenced by various dimensions of service quality, namely Empathy, Assurance, Tangibility, and Responsiveness. To enhance customer satisfaction, MERALCO should consider the following recommendations:

Focus on Empathy: Continue the practice of going the extra mile to make customers feel special and valued during interactions. Train customer service representatives to exhibit thoughtfulness, care, and attention to customers' questions and concerns. Providing clear payment instructions and accommodating customers who are unable to pay their bills promptly can contribute to higher levels of customer satisfaction. The researchers recommend to MERALCO management to express empathy with customers and considers installment payment to customers with reasonable explanation as to why bills remain unpaid given the customers provide a valid and justifiable reason as the area enters the post-pandemic period.

Strengthen Assurance: Invest in employee training and development to improve skills and competencies. By inspiring trust and confidence in customers, MERALCO can create an environment that promotes feelings of safety and comfort during the service delivery process. Emphasize the company's commitment to customer safety and uninterrupted electric service, especially during challenging times such as the ongoing pandemic.

Enhance Responsiveness: Minimize waiting durations for customer interactions by implementing effective communication systems and processes. Provide early announcements, timely information, and prompt responses to customer reports. By addressing customer needs and concerns in a timely manner, MERALCO can enhance satisfaction levels and foster positive customer experiences. Since MERALCO already has digital platforms and channels, it is advised to encourage customers to use more of them for communication.

Consider Service Cost: Although service cost was found to significantly affect customer satisfaction, the study indicates that some customers expressed dissatisfaction with the reasonable pricing offered by MERALCO. Conduct further research and analysis to identify appropriate pricing strategies that align with customer expectations while ensuring the company's financial viability. Balancing competitive pricing with high-quality service can positively impact customer behavior and satisfaction.

Continuously Improve Service Quality: Recognizing that service quality had the highest coefficient in relation to customer satisfaction, MERALCO should prioritize ongoing efforts to improve overall service quality. Regularly assess customer feedback, conduct surveys, and implement quality improvement initiatives based on customer expectations and changing needs.

By developing programs and offering avenues for people to use, the government may encourage lending and assistance among citizens. It is advised to expand partnerships with banks and other third-party payments to boost online payment. Banks and third-party payment providers may advertise rebates to entice customers to use online payments.

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