Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality: A Study on BRELA in Tanzania

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study focused on assessing customer satisfaction with the quality of services provided by Tanzania's Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA), particularly its Communication Unit in Dar es Salaam. The research had three main objectives: identifying frequently inquired services at the Communication Unit, evaluating customer satisfaction levels, and gathering customer perspectives. The study aimed to assess the level of customer satisfaction and service quality as the result of BRELA's efforts to enhance services and introduce online options in 2018. Using the SERVQUAL scale, the study examined seven service quality dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Communication, and Understanding. A quantitative approach was adopted, involving a survey with convenience sampling to gather data from diverse respondents, including entrepreneurs, company owners, and prospective business starters in Tanzania. To ensure a balanced representation, the study received 20 calls daily at the call center for 19 days. Data collection involved a coded Excel questionnaire installed on call center computers. Analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. Among the findings, Company Registrations emerged as the most requested service, with 242 out of 384 respondents seeking it. Respondents generally reported satisfaction with BRELA's services across the seven quality dimensions, and 79.2% held a positive perception

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of BRELA. The study recommended transforming the Communication Unit into the Directorate of Corporate Communications and Customer Service, enhancing the call center system, conducting awareness campaigns, and emphasizing adherence to the Client Service Charter. These recommendations aimed to improve BRELA's service quality, customer satisfaction, and the public.

1. INTRODUCTION

Business Registrations Licensing Agency (BRELA) is an Executive Agency under the Ministry of Industry and Trade responsible for business administration and regulation of the laws; namely Companies Registration, Business Names Registration, Trade and Service Marks Registration, granting of Patents and issuing of Industrial and business Licenses. It was established under the Government Executive Agencies Act Cap 245 and formally launched on 3rd December 1999.BRELA in 2018 introduced an Online Registrations System aiming to improve the quality-of-service delivery and satisfaction of its customers. Unexpectedly number of calls from Entrepreneurs, Company owners, and business owners of small scale, medium, and large scale has emerged and remained high concerning different services that they receive from the Agency. Referring to the call center report for a period between January to December 2022 number of calls received was 98,813 with answered 59,564 equal to 60.3% and unanswered 39,279 equal to 39.7%. On the other hand, despite being a monopoly institution in business registration and licensing, the Business Registration and Licensing Agency (BRELA) lacks sufficient records or data on customer satisfaction and service quality which could help to improve the services. In addition, the agency faces challenges from intermediaries who act as middlemen between clients and the agency. Therefore, although BRELA has implemented an online registration system, the number of customers seeking assistance from the call center remains high. This study therefore assessed customer satisfaction with BRELA's service quality to determine the reasons behind a high number of calls to the call center and proposed effective solutions [1].

1.1 Background of the Study

Customer satisfaction is a multifaceted concept with its complexity stemming from the challenge of identifying and fulfilling customer needs and expectations. While understanding the factors influencing customer satisfaction is essential, it does not guarantee dominance in the market, as verifying satisfaction comprehensively remains elusive [2]. Service-based institutions, heavily reliant on customer support, must ensure high-quality services to sustain stability and growth [3].

Agbor [4] emphasized the direct link between service quality and customer satisfaction. High-quality services are expected to result in satisfied customers, highlighting the importance of continuous improvement. For institutions that provide a mix of mandatory and voluntary services, strategizing to engage a wider audience becomes crucial. This study aimed to contribute to this knowledge gap by evaluating customer satisfaction and service quality offered by BRELA in Dar es Salaam. It utilizes the Serviqual model's five dimensions reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility [5].

BRELA, responsible for business administration and services including company registration, business name registration, trademarks, patents, and industrial licenses, plays a pivotal role in Tanzania's business landscape [6]. To fulfill its mandate effectively, it must employ strategies to gauge customer satisfaction, thereby attracting and retaining customers. The core belief behind customer satisfaction is that contented customers are more likely to seek additional services and speak positively about the institution, enhancing its reputation. Conversely, dissatisfied customers may refrain from seeking services, leading to a decline in customer numbers. Considering these challenges, conducting studies, and establishing effective strategies to improve service quality and satisfaction becomes paramount. This study aimed to bridge the existing knowledge gap by investigating customer satisfaction and service quality within the public services sector, focusing on BRELA in Tanzania.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The selected theory for this study was the Kano Model, developed by Dr. Noriaki Kano in 1984.

This theory is fundamental in explaining customer behavior, particularly in terms of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and loyalty toward service providers. Just as how a solid foundation is crucial when building a house, in research, theoretical literature serves as the foundation for the study. The Kano Model sought to elucidate the intricate relationship between customer satisfaction, service quality, and the factors influencing customer satisfaction. It posits that the success of a product or service is contingent upon its ability to effectively address one or more critical customer problems [7].

Dr. Kano's model categorized customer requirements into five distinct categories:

1. Performance: This category encompasses requirements that hold the highest priority in the minds of prospective customers when making choices and evaluating options. The better these requirements are met by the service provider, the more satisfied the customer becomes.

2. Basic: Basic requirements are those that customers expect as a minimum standard from the service. When these requirements are met, customers remain neutral, but if they are poorly fulfilled, it leads to dissatisfaction because they fall short of customer expectations.

3. Excitement: Excitement requirements include unexpected elements or innovations that a company may add to the service. These elements do not cause dissatisfaction because they were not initially expected by the customer.

4. Indifferent: Indifferent requirements are those that customers neither care about nor are affected by. Whether they are present or absent does not influence customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

5. Reverse: Reverse requirements are those that, when present, cause dissatisfaction but, conversely, cause satisfaction when absent.

In the context of this study, customers were assessed based on all five categories, and their responses were classified accordingly. The Kano Model served as a valuable tool for gathering data to prioritize service features and determine which ones had the most significant impact on customer satisfaction. By focusing on the right features identified through this model, public institutions can develop services that align with customer expectations and enhance satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Hsiao and Lin [8] The two scholars conducted a study to investigate service quality in the public sector and how government institutions extended customer-oriented ideas throughout the whole organization using a service system design and management. They conducted the study using the COSES model (customer-oriented service-enhancement system), supported by in-depth interviews, to categorize service strategies collected and study public sector institutions' customer-oriented serving people mindset and approach. This study is suitable for government institutions, evaluating domestic government institutions with customer-oriented service mindsets like BRELA. This research method was less applied in public administration service, which was the difference of this study from other studies. Using qualitative research methods, the study found that in the environment of intense competition today, the public sector was no longer organized in the traditional section hierarchy system. It must focus on customers like the private sector and receive customer-oriented innovation.

Looking on the side of the private sector Almossawi [9] conducted a study examining Customer Satisfaction in the Mobile Telecom Industry in Bahrain; the author has explored the potential causes of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction of the customer is based on the quality of the service or product that is being offered versus the feedback that the customer gives after using the product or service and not the manufactures viewpoint on whether the product satisfies the prospective customer or not. In the same way, Khan and Afsheen [10] conducted a study to examine what are the factors that can lead to customer satisfaction; the study was conducted in the Pakistan telecommunication industry. The study identified six factors that have a role in customer satisfaction those factors are signal strength, promotional technique, fairness of the price versus the service provided, coverage, and customer service. The two studies give insight into the similar expectation of customers in the public and private sector.

Dewi [11] conducted a study to assess Service Quality Assessment Using SERVQUAL and Kano Models. The purpose of this study was to find out on quality of services by using the integration of the two instruments. The scholars used SERVQUAL to establish the quality criteria

that must be upgraded. Through this method the quality criteria are based on the weaknesses that transpires between differences in perceptions and expectation of customers for the services they receive. Meanwhile, the Kano method was used to categorize service attributes that satisfy customer needs. SERVQUAL integration and the Kano model were carried out by synchronizing the SERVQUAL gap value and the Kano model grade. Assessment of service attributes obtained from both methods produces service attributes that which were the focus of management's improvement to improve service quality. The findings of this study revealed that the criteria that must be more focused on were attributes that included attractive and one-dimensional categories which had the highest negative gap value. Improvements on the identified attribute had a direct connection and impact on the perception of customers towards the services that they receive, the quality of service and customer satisfaction.

Rahman [12] conducted a study to analyze the factors that are responsible for turning a prospective customer to be a loyal customer of the service provider in the Bangladesh context, through his study this scholar identified that study concludes that in increasing customer satisfaction, mobile service providers should care those factors have an important influence on bringing customer satisfaction In Bangladesh Telecommunications companies. Altogether the studies conducted on supported on another, and through this study all these issues are going to be discussed on the Tanzanian context thus at the end this study it was aimed to findout what are the customers needs and want, and what are the factors that are needed to satisfy the prospective customers as well as what are the opinion of the prospective customers of BRELA on improving the service that was provided to them.

Al-Borie [13] the scholar conducted a study to find out on Patients' satisfaction of service quality in Saudi hospitals using a SERVQUAL analysis. The purpose of the study was to find out patient satisfaction with the services that they receive from the hospitals. On conducting this study, the scholars used a stratified random sample which included 1,000 inpatients obtained from five Saudi Arabian public and five private hospitals. Data were collected through questionnaire using the SERVQUAL scale and analyzed using SPSS and appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results reviled that

sex, education, revenue, and employment were statistically significant in influencing inpatients' satisfaction, and all the null hypotheses were rejected. The study emphasizes that service quality has influence in creation of deeper healthcare strategies for public and private hospitals. It was through this study that light was shade on how to improve the management and running of these facilities to make customers more comfortable with the service that they receive.

Delgado et al. [14] the scholars conducted a study by using the SERVQUAL scale to find out on the perceived service quality of study platforms which are being used by different people (e-learning platform). What triggered the scholars to conduct this study was the situations of limited number of materials using the SERVQUAL for evaluation of the phenomena on subject. The study focus was to come with knowledge that contributes to shade light on this gap, generating new trends and insight for the service quality literature by proposing an adaptation of the SERVQUAL scale for online sustainability courses.: The study was carried out including respondent which were the undergraduate and post-graduate students registered at a Brazilian higher education institution. A a questionnaire with 21 questions was distributed to respondents to analyze the perceived service quality of the students before and after completing the online course. The findings of the study reveals that the most prominent factors were linked to empathy, assurance, and tangibility dimensions of quality. Evidently its was discovered that, a strong emphasis was placed on effectively resolving user inquiries, as well as utilizing audio and video resources to aid students in their learning journey.

Bougoure and Lee [15] the scholars conducted a study on a different subject. These scholars investigated consumer perceptions of service quality in wet markets and supermarkets in Hong Kong. Data from respondents were collected by using questionnaire which was developed and distributed via a convenience sample to consumers in shopping malls in Causeway Bay, Mong Kok and Tsuen Wan. Findings of this study shows that supermarkets provide better service to the customers as compared to wet markets across all aspects of service quality which include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, accessibility, credibility, communication, courtesy, and security. The

scholars concluded that because the quality of services is judged by consumers it is important for those who are not in favour of the customers to improve the services that most of the customers are not satisfied with them.

Negi [16] the scholar conducted this study in Ethiopia context to determine satisfaction through customer-perceived service quality and value The study aimed to find out the pushing factors for service quality and customer value on the overall satisfaction of mobile users in Ethiopia. The scholar deployed questionnaires to gather primary data from respondents who were the 250 mobile subscribers of the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC). An assessment of service quality gaps (between perception and expectation) was conducted and uncovered negative gaps across all service quality dimensions. These gaps ranged from the lowest in the Tangibles dimension to the highest in the newly introduced Network Quality dimension. Moreover, the study demonstrated that both overall service quality and overall customer value significantly contribute to the overall satisfaction of customers.

Other scholars Khamis and AbRashid [17] conducted a study on Service quality and customer satisfaction in Tanzanian Islamic banks the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship that exists between service quality and customer satisfaction, and the effect of service quality on customer' satisfaction. This study used a questionnaire as the tool for data collection where a total of 384 were shared with the respondents and 255 were returned for analysis which was done by using SPSS. The two scholars found that customers are satisfied with the Islamic banking services provided by Tanzania banks. However, it has been discovered that customers are attracted by the compliance, tangibility, and reliability of the banks. The findings further revealed a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Indeed, empathy, compliance, and reliability were found to be the only significant predictors of customer satisfaction.

MCom and Lance [18] conducted a study on Customer Satisfaction in Local Government: The Case of the Restructured City of Perth, Australia. This study was focused on customer satisfaction at the local government level, using the break-up of the City of Perth, Australia, into new suburban Local Governments of Cambridge, Victoria Park,

and Vincent. The study employed the use of a mail survey on customer satisfaction to 1,500 residents across the three Local Governments. Findings suggest that by and large, customers are more satisfied with the new smaller Local Governments than with the former, larger Local Governments.

Rhee and Seung-Kyu [19] the scholars went beyond the existing SERVQUAL-based research, the two scholars went ahead and developed an alternative model of public service quality. The various sources of public service quality were explored, and a new classification scheme was formulated by using the critical incidents technique. Four main qualities of public service are identified: process quality, outcome quality, design quality, and relationship quality. The findings of this study suggested that the critical attributes of public service quality for customer satisfaction differ according to the types of customers in the public sector. The scholar further adds that final customers (beneficiaries) give priority to the process and outcome qualities, whereas intermediary customers (social workers) have high regard for the design and relationship qualities.

Engdaw [20] conducted a study in Ethiopia, aiming to find The Impact of Quality Public Service Delivery on Customer Satisfaction in Bahir Dar City Administration using as Case of the Ginbot 20 Sub-city. The main objective of this study was to assess the impact of quality public service delivery on customer satisfaction in the Ginbot 20 sub-city. For this study, the researcher used a correlational research design, and quantitative research approach whereas a total of 88 samples both from customers (68) and service providers (20) were selected using simple random sampling and systematic random sampling techniques respectively. Data were collected using questionnaires. Based on the data collected, the study comes up with certain findings. The scholar later found that the perception of customers and service providers on quality service delivery and customer satisfaction is different, responsiveness, tangibility, assurance, communication, and reliability have positively associated with customer satisfaction. However, empathy has negatively associated with customer satisfaction.

Al-nidawi et al. [21] conducted a study on A Review of E-Government Service Quality Measurement. The scholar argued that Governments are responsible for providing

services to the public easily, and efficiently, for that reason, they introduced electronic government to minimize costs, enhance services, save time, and augment performance and efficacy in the public sector. Following that advancement of technology, the government decided to introduce the provision of its services via a system however Quality is one of the critical issues which leads to the failure or success of e-government projects. It promotes the efficiency and effectiveness of governments and the relationships with users and enhances their satisfaction. Measurement of e-service quality is a complex process because it depends on citizens' perceptions which is difficult to realize and measure. The paper, therefore, focused on reviewing scales measurement of e-government services quality that providing an evaluating scale based on defining the significant e-service quality dimensions. These dimensions cover important e-service requirements to enhance e-service quality. It was later found that systems fail because of poor service quality hence they should be improved.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research approach adopted in this study was quantitative, aiming to collect data from a diverse group of respondents and present results in a factual and statistical format. Quantitative research involves generating data in a quantitative form for rigorous analysis. It can be classified into inferential, experimental, and simulation approaches [22]. The research design employed was a survey design, which allows for rapid data collection and numeric explanations of trends, attitudes, or opinions within a population. Survey research uses quantitative strategies to collect data that can be generalized and used for decision-making. In this study, the design correlates with quantitative research, including the research approach, sampling techniques, research methods, and data analysis.

The target population consists of entrepreneurs, company owners, and individuals planning to establish businesses in Tanzania, who serve as the intended respondents for the research. Convenience sampling was used to select respondents, focusing on those accessible to the researcher and able to provide reliable information. The researcher received 20 calls per day at a call center station for 19 days to ensure data collection from various regions and reduce

the number of calls per day to gather diverse data. The sample size for the study was 384, drawn from the list of business owners and customers registered with BRELA through the Online Registration System and Tanzania National Business Portal.

Data collection was done by using a questionnaire as the research instrument. Questionnaires are cost-efficient, maintain respondent anonymity, provide quick results, and allow respondents time to think and answer without pressure [23]. The questionnaires were coded in Excel and administered in a call center environment. Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel, enabling the organization and presentation of quantitative data in tables, charts, and graphs [24].

4. RESULTS

One of the objectives of this study was to find out the services that are most requested by customers. The findings of this inquiry were vital to help the communication Unit plan strategies on where to direct the communication efforts when planning their public awareness activities. The findings showed that Company registration is the most applied service to the people who are calling at the BRELA call center with 242 respondents equal to 63% followed by Business Names Registrations with 107 respondents equal to 27.9%. The high number of calls received from respondents who applied for Company Registrations it might be because of the difficulty in applying for the service or because the service has a lot of post-registration procedures that are complex and require legal knowledge or at least guidance to effectively. The second service that recorded a high number of calls was Business Names registration which is the simplest application to file, and it has fewer complex procedures. The least was Trade and Service Mark Registrations which was least applied with only 9 calls recorded. The findings on this question gave insight about the first objective which was to understand which service is more applied by the customer. The findings gave direction on where to direct the communication efforts. From the findings it was clearly that Company Registration is the leading services that brings high traffic of calls, the communication may use this first input to find a solution to minimize the high traffic and the vice versa to the service that has low traffic [25].

Table 1. Respondents' distribution by service applied

Respondents' distribution by service applied		
Service applied	Frequency	Percent
Company Registrations	242	63
Business Names Registrations	107	27.9
Trade and Service Mark Registration	9	2.3
Business License Class A	14	3.6
Industrial License	12	3.1

Source: Field Data 2023

Table 2. Satisfaction with BRELA services

Satisfaction with BRELA services		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Very satisfied	40	10.40%
Satisfied	271	70.60%
Neutral	41	10.70%
Dissatisfied	28	7.30%
Very dissatisfied	4	1.00%

Source: Field Data 2023

Table 3. Satisfaction with BRELA services

Perception of services		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Very poor	8	2.10%
Poor	15	3.90%
Fair	34	8.90%
Good	304	79.20%
Very good	23	6.00%

Source: Field Data 2023

The primary objective of this question was to assess customer satisfaction levels regarding the services provided by BRELA. The results indicate that a significant majority, specifically 271 respondents (70.6%), reported satisfaction with BRELA services. Among them, 40 respondents (10.4%) reported being very satisfied. On the other hand, a small number of customers, specifically 4 respondents (1.0%), indicated very dissatisfied. Other recorded variable indicates that 41 Respondents (10.7%) are neutral which means they are not satisfied or dissatisfied, and 28 respondents (7.3%) reported being dissatisfied. According to the data collected, it was evident that a high number of customers are satisfied with the services offered by the agency. The findings also indicate a strong correlation between the frequency of calls and customer satisfaction with BRELA services. Specifically, out of the 165 respondents who made only one call, 131 of them reported satisfaction, and there were no reports of dissatisfaction or very dissatisfaction. Contrariwise, a notable number of dissatisfied respondents were found among those who made three or more calls, as well as among those who couldn't recall the exact number of calls, they made [26].

This question was set by the researcher purposely to understand the perception of the customers towards BRELA as an institution. The Answer to this question was vital because the perception of the institution when it is negative poses a threat to its sustainability and customer retention. The findings showed that high number of respondents which was 304 equal to 79.2% reported that the perception of BRELA is good, 34 respondents equal to 8.90% reported to have a fair perception which imply that they are do not perceive the institution positive or negative, 23 respondents equal to 6.0% reported to have a very good perception of the institution, 15 respondents equal to 3.9% reported to have a poor perception toward the institution and 8 respondents equal to 2.1% reported to have a very poor perception toward the institution [27].

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the importance of customer focus and feedback for government institutions in improving service quality and ultimately satisfying their customers. Key factors influencing customer satisfaction include customer expectations, perceived service quality, and the disconfirmation of expectations. Managing and meeting customer expectations is crucial for enhancing satisfaction levels. Efficient and effective customer support is essential, as individuals facing repeated difficulties when contacting the institution without receiving help are more likely to become dissatisfied. Delays in processing applications also contribute to customer dissatisfaction, emphasizing the need for streamlined processes and reduced bureaucratic delays [28].

Government institutions can enhance customer satisfaction by adopting customer-centric approaches from the private sector. This includes actively seeking and incorporating customer feedback, managing customer expectations, and addressing issues leading to dissatisfaction. The comparison of this study with others highlighted that customer satisfaction varies depending on the specific service and industry context. Different industries have unique factors influencing customer satisfaction, emphasizing the need to tailor services to meet sector-specific needs. The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction holds across different contexts, indicating its general importance. Common factors such as responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and customer experience play a crucial role in determining satisfaction [29].

The study identified factors contributing to customer satisfaction, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, staff competence, accessibility, effective communication, and understanding of the customer. Reliability emerged as a dominant determinant of satisfaction. Investing in the infrastructure supporting online service systems is crucial to enhance user satisfaction. Positive service experiences contribute to customer satisfaction, while poor service quality can lead to dissatisfaction. The alignment between service quality and customer satisfaction highlights the fundamental role of quality in government projects. High-quality services lead to positive customer experiences, fostering satisfaction and trust. Rhee and Seung-Kyu's study suggests that customer satisfaction may vary based on customer types in the public sector. Public service quality may have distinct determinants, emphasizing the need for context-specific approaches. The differing findings between industry-focused research and Rhee and Seung-Kyu's study indicate the complexity of public service quality. Tailored research in the public sector is essential to understanding its unique determinants of customer satisfaction [30-32].

6. CONCLUSIONS

After conducting an Assessment on customer satisfaction on the quality of Services using the SERVQUAL Model several conclusions can be drawn.

The analysis has revealed that Company registration is the most requested service by customers, followed by Business name registrations, while Trade and Service Mark Registrations received the least number of calls. On the other hand, Patent registration is a service that is either unpopular because people do not know about it, or the most difficult application to apply.

In terms of the seven dimensions of service quality assessed by this study, BRELA received positive ratings. The findings showed that respondents agreed with the efficiency of the systems, BRELA's ability to deliver promised services, staff responsiveness, competence, accessibility, effective communication, and efforts to understand customer needs. These positive ratings highlight BRELA's commitment to delivering quality services and meeting customer expectations.

Customer satisfaction with BRELA services was generally good, with a noteworthy number of respondents reporting satisfaction with the BRELA. On the same line satisfaction with the call center specifically was also reported as satisfactory by a substantial majority of respondents. Moreover, the study revealed a positive correlation between the frequency of calls made and customer satisfaction, with higher satisfaction levels reported by those who made fewer calls.

The findings indicated that customers have a positive perception of BRELA, with many respondents perceiving the institution satisfactorily across various aspects of as reputation, credibility, trustworthiness, customer satisfaction, quality of products or services,

ethical practices, employee satisfaction, innovation, and overall performance. BRELA was reported as reliable, competent, trustworthy, and capable of meeting customer needs and expectations.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended transforming the Communication Unit into the Directorate of Corporate Communications and Customer Service, enhancing the call center system, conducting awareness campaigns, and emphasizing adherence to the Client Service Charter.

Ethical considerations were addressed by introducing the researcher, explaining the study's purpose, ensuring the confidentiality and safety of respondents, emphasizing the right to withdraw from the study, and avoiding any risks to privacy and dignity.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/119627