

# Challenges and Opportunities in Public Service Delivery of Samelco II

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*Abstract* — Public service delivery in the energy sector is essential to socio-economic development, particularly in underserved and geographically isolated communities. This study examined the challenges and opportunities encountered by the Samar II Electric Cooperative (SAMELCO II) in delivering reliable and equitable electricity services. It focused on the perspectives of two key stakeholder groups—employees and consumers—specifically concerning service accessibility, institutional trust, consumer satisfaction, and operational performance. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study employed structured survey instruments administered to a purposive sample of employees and a representative sample of consumers from various service areas. Data gathered included demographic profiles, satisfaction levels, perceived service barriers, and suggestions for improvement. Statistical analyses, including correlation analysis and independent samples t-tests, were used to determine significant differences and associations between the two groups. Findings indicated a marked divergence in stakeholder perceptions. Consumers, especially those from rural and low-income sectors, reported persistent issues such as unreliable service, ineffective complaint resolution, and limited access to information. Conversely, employees emphasized internal challenges such as operational efficiency, compliance with service standards, and infrastructure limitations. Despite these perceptual gaps, both groups acknowledged SAMELCO II's moderate performance and pointed to areas for development. The study highlighted the role of socio-demographic factors—such as income and education—in shaping service expectations. Strategic recommendations included adopting digital platforms, enhancing community engagement, and implementing policy reforms and infrastructure modernization. These efforts were deemed critical to improving service equity, strengthening institutional trust, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable energy access in the region.

*Keywords* — *Public Service Delivery, SAMELCO II, Consumer and Employee Perspectives, Institutional Trust, Citizen Satisfaction, Service Accessibility, Service Equity*

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## I. Introduction

In response to increasing demands, evolving technologies, and rising consumer expectations, the delivery of public utility services had become a pressing concern, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Public service providers, including electric cooperatives, faced complex challenges involving limited infrastructure, inadequate workforce capacity, and accountability pressures. Recent studies underscored that reliable energy provision fostered civic

confidence and social stability (Buchanan et al., 2023), while global data revealed persistent disparities in access, particularly in marginalized areas (World Bank, 2022; IEA, 2023). In Southeast Asia, efforts to modernize through smart grids were hindered by limited staff training and resource constraints (ASEAN Centre for Energy, 2022).

In the Philippines, despite legal mandates under Republic Act No. 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), many cooperatives—such as SAMELCO II—struggled with financial instability, non-compliance, and operational inefficiencies (ERC, 2024). Local studies further documented weak complaint mechanisms, digital exclusion, and cybersecurity gaps (DICT, 2024; Del Rosario et al., 2023). Specific to SAMELCO II in Paranas, Samar, recurring power interruptions, limited infrastructure, and staff challenges had undermined public trust and employee morale (Leyte Samar Daily News, 2024; Reyes & Manuel, 2023). Despite these constraints, digital innovations and policy reforms presented opportunities for service improvement and governance renewal (Nguyen et al., 2022; Thompson & Lee, 2021).

This study investigated the delivery of energy services by SAMELCO II, focusing on operational performance, consumer satisfaction, and stakeholder engagement during SY 2024–2025, with the aim of proposing strategic improvements for inclusive rural electrification. It determined the challenges and opportunities in the public service delivery of Samar II Electric Cooperative (SAMELCO II). Specifically, it aimed to address several research questions. First, it explored the profile of consumer-respondents in terms of their highest educational attainment, monthly family income, and place of residence. Second, it assessed the level of challenges in SAMELCO II's service delivery as perceived by both consumers and employees. Third, it examined the level of opportunities in public service delivery across residential, commercial, industrial, and public building sectors, focusing on four dimensions: the achievement of desired societal outcomes, citizen satisfaction, institutional trust, and intangible elements contributing to public welfare. Fourth, it investigated whether significant differences existed in the perceived challenges when consumers were grouped according to their profile. Fifth, it evaluated whether consumer profiles influenced their assessment of opportunities in service delivery. Sixth, it analyzed the differences in opportunity assessments between employees and consumers. Seventh, it examined the relationship between consumers' profiles and the level of opportunities they reported. Eighth, it determined whether a significant relationship existed between the levels of challenges and opportunities in public service delivery as assessed by the respondents. Lastly, based on the findings, the study proposed a strategic plan to address the identified issues. To guide the statistical analysis, the study tested two null hypotheses: (Ho1) that no significant differences existed in the perceived challenges when respondents were grouped by profile; and (Ho2) that no significant differences existed in the perceived opportunities based on their profiles.

## Literature Review

In the contemporary era, the imperative for efficient and responsive public utility services has intensified due to population growth, technological advancement, and evolving consumer

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expectations. Scholars such as Buchanan et al. (2023) emphasized that consistent and equitable utility delivery not only ensures operational efficiency but also fosters civic confidence, social cohesion, and institutional legitimacy. Public service providers are increasingly confronted with multidimensional challenges—including limited resources, accelerated innovation, and mounting demands for accountability—which necessitate both systemic reforms and stakeholder-oriented governance approaches.

The global context further complicates these dynamics. The International Energy Agency (2023) reported a growing incidence of blackouts linked to climate-induced disruptions and aging infrastructure, while the World Bank (2022) estimated that over 733 million individuals still lacked access to electricity. Concurrently, digital transformation has introduced a paradox: while it has enabled automation and real-time responsiveness, it has also intensified accessibility gaps, especially in rural and marginalized communities (UNDESA, 2023). These realities underscore the urgency of inclusive energy access strategies and digital equity frameworks in utility governance.

In Southeast Asia, the tension between rapid technological adoption and workforce readiness remains pronounced. The ASEAN Centre for Energy (2022) noted that although smart grids are being deployed, many cooperatives, including those in the Philippines, lag in terms of technical training and institutional adaptation. SAMELCO II exemplifies these challenges. Despite the intent of Republic Act No. 9136 (EPIRA) to liberalize and improve power distribution, cooperatives like SAMELCO II continue to grapple with regulatory compliance, financial viability, and persistent service interruptions (ERC, 2024). These operational gaps are compounded by bureaucratic limitations and infrastructure deficits, particularly in rural settings.

Internal organizational challenges also contribute to service delivery inefficiencies. Reyes and Manuel (2023) revealed that employees in provincial electric cooperatives often experience high workloads, limited upskilling opportunities, and weak institutional support, negatively impacting morale and service quality. Del Rosario et al. (2023) further affirmed that communication breakdowns and slow response times are major pain points for consumers in Eastern Visayas. Meanwhile, digital transformation has introduced new vulnerabilities; DICT (2024) reported widespread non-compliance with the Data Privacy Act among cooperatives, leaving consumer data exposed and undermining institutional trust.

Despite these obstacles, emerging opportunities suggest promising pathways for reform. Nguyen et al. (2022) emphasized that mobile billing systems and prepaid metering can enhance efficiency and customer engagement, while Thompson and Lee (2021) underscored the strategic value of integrating employee insights with consumer feedback to align services with stakeholder needs. However, they cautioned that these gains require parallel investments in human capital and digital literacy to avoid underutilization. EPIRA and data protection laws, if strategically applied, could become instruments for driving innovation, enhancing transparency, and fostering inclusive service delivery.

Numerous empirical studies have reinforced these conclusions. Garcia and Santos (2022) highlighted the centrality of effective service delivery systems in public trust-building, while Alonzo and Ferrer (2023) discussed the structural barriers in rural electrification—geographic isolation, financial constraints, and lack of infrastructure. Research by Rojas and Delos Reyes (2024) and Lim and Cruz (2024) illustrated how public-private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms can help cooperatives like SAMELCO II overcome capital limitations and scale operations. Complementarily, studies by Pineda and Tan (2021) and Mendoza and Alvarado (2022) emphasized the importance of service quality, responsiveness, and digital tools in elevating customer satisfaction and operational transparency.

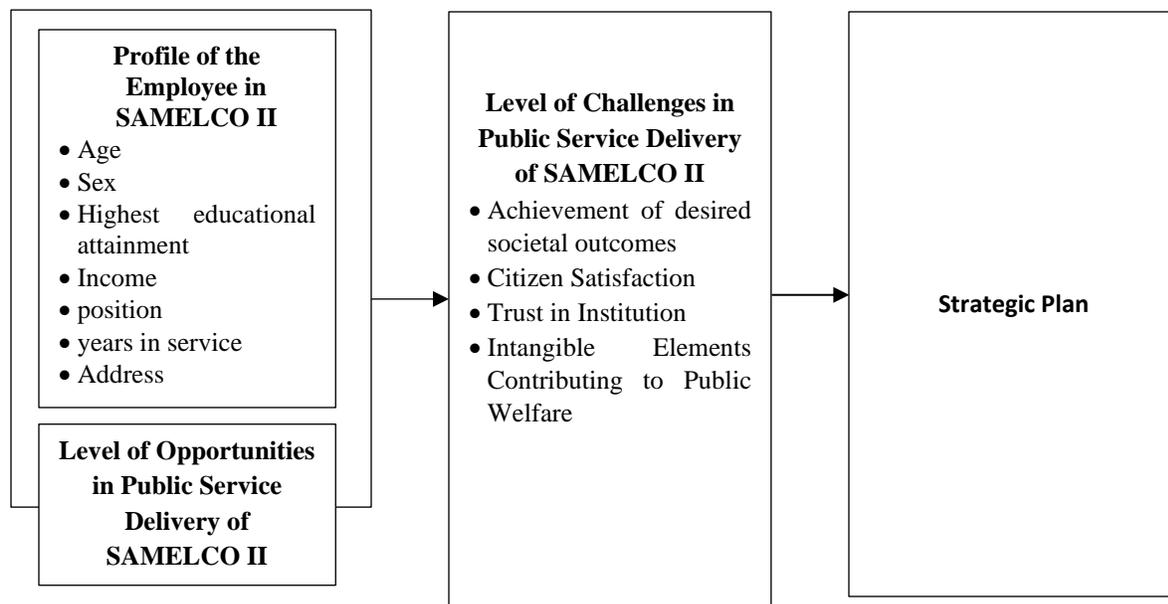
Lastly, scholars have drawn attention to broader systemic and community-based approaches. Salcedo and Villanueva (2023) argued that community participation fosters responsiveness, while Jimenez and Alvarado (2021) emphasized regulatory streamlining through institutional dialogue. Other researchers, including Delgado and Ramos (2023) and Villanueva and Pineda (2024), advocated for environmental sustainability and capacity-building as integral components of effective utility management. Studies on leadership (Alonzo & Cruz, 2023), equity (Rojas & Torres, 2021), and adaptability (Jimenez & Salcedo, 2022) further reveal the importance of stakeholder engagement, policy coherence, and inclusive governance. Altogether, these studies provide a multi-perspective foundation for understanding and improving the public service delivery landscape of SAMELCO II.

The framework of this study is anchored on a multi-theoretical foundation to explore the dynamics of public service delivery within Samar Electric Cooperative II (SAMELCO II). Central to this framework is Public Value Theory (Moore, 1995), which emphasizes that public services must generate outcomes that are meaningful to citizens, such as equity, trust, and responsiveness. This theory provides a normative lens for evaluating how SAMELCO II aligns its operations with the evolving needs of its stakeholders. Complementing this is Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 2010), which allows the study to examine how internal values, norms, and behaviors shape service performance. It underscores that a cooperative's cultural orientation—whether innovation-driven or bureaucratic—can either constrain or facilitate service improvement. In conjunction, Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) reinforces the necessity of understanding the interdependent relationships between SAMELCO II and its key actors, particularly employees, consumers, and the broader community. These theories collectively guide the inquiry into the organizational, cultural, and relational determinants of service quality.

To further refine the analysis, the study integrates Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic), as articulated by Vargo and Lusch (2004), which positions value as co-created through interactions between service providers and users. This perspective departs from traditional utility models that view consumers as passive recipients and instead frames them as active participants in shaping service quality. S-D Logic supports the investigation of both tangible challenges—such as infrastructure and workforce limitations—and intangible opportunities, such as collaborative

feedback loops and innovation through engagement. Together, these theories offer a holistic and systems-based view of public service delivery, illuminating how organizational processes, stakeholder trust, and citizen participation interact to influence outcomes in rural electrification. The integration of these complementary perspectives enables a nuanced understanding of how SAMELCO II's institutional performance may be optimized through strategic, citizen-centered interventions.

The conceptual framework of the study, illustrated in Figure 1, operationalizes these theoretical insights by examining the relationship between key variables: consumer profiles (educational attainment, income, residence), the perceived level of service challenges, and the available opportunities for improving service delivery. It posits that consumer perceptions and employee characteristics jointly shape institutional outcomes, particularly in terms of societal impact, citizen satisfaction, trust in the cooperative, and contributions to public welfare. This framework is aligned with models of New Public Governance (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015) and integrated performance measurement systems that evaluate service inputs, outputs, and outcomes. It also reflects current public administration practices that prioritize data-driven, inclusive, and adaptive policymaking (World Bank, 2023; Nutley, Powell & Davies, 2022). By applying this framework, the study not only seeks to diagnose the factors affecting SAMELCO II's public service performance but also to propose a strategic development plan that is empirically grounded and responsive to the cooperative's operational realities and community aspirations.



**Figure 1. A Schematic Diagram of the Study Showing the challenges and opportunities in the public service delivery of SAMELCO II.**

## II. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the challenges and opportunities in public service delivery at Samar II Electric Cooperative (SAMELCO II). As a non-experimental quantitative method, this design was appropriate for analyzing associations between variables without manipulating them, in line with Creswell's (2014) definition. The descriptive component facilitated the profiling of consumer and employee respondents based on demographic attributes such as educational attainment, income, position, and place of residence. This profiling provided contextual depth in understanding stakeholder perspectives. The correlational aspect, meanwhile, enabled the assessment of significant relationships between respondent profiles and their perceptions of service delivery efficiency, responsiveness, and institutional trust. The design's strength lay in its ability to provide data-driven insights for strategic planning without inferring causality (Babbie, 2020).

The sample of the study comprised both employees and consumers of SAMELCO II. For the employee group, a total of 126 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across departments and roles. This technique allowed for a more comprehensive examination of how internal organizational dynamics influence perceptions of service quality. The consumer sample included 300 participants, selected through systematic sampling from a list of recent service users. By applying a fixed interval method, every  $n$ th consumer was included, ensuring randomness while capturing those with recent service interactions. Table 1 reflects this distribution across key service areas, with a higher concentration in Poblacion Paranas and Catbalogan—areas identified as key service hubs.

To measure key constructs, the study utilized a researcher-developed, structured questionnaire divided into three parts. Part I focused on demographic data, while Part II assessed perceived challenges in public service delivery, and Part III explored perceived opportunities for improvement. The opportunities section was further divided into four sub-domains: achievement of societal outcomes, citizen satisfaction, institutional trust, and intangible welfare contributions. Each item was rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The instrument underwent a pilot test involving 30 clients outside the study sample, yielding high reliability scores. As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.893 to 0.929 across all sections, confirming excellent internal consistency and the instrument's suitability for field administration.

Data collection procedures were executed with methodological rigor. Consumer respondents were approached via face-to-face interviews or online surveys, depending on accessibility and preference, while the employee group was surveyed through complete enumeration. Prior to distribution, the research team secured approval from SAMELCO II and ensured that the purpose, voluntary nature, and ethical safeguards of the study were clearly communicated. Respondents were given informed consent forms, assuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time. Surveys were administered under the supervision of trained field

personnel to minimize measurement errors and promote accurate data recording. This dual-mode approach ensured inclusivity across urban and remote areas, thereby increasing the robustness of the findings.

Data processing and analysis followed a parametric statistical approach, as preliminary testing confirmed the normality of data distribution. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were computed to characterize respondent profiles and assess central tendencies related to service delivery perceptions. Inferential techniques such as One-Way ANOVA were used to identify differences across consumer subgroups, followed by post hoc tests to pinpoint specific group variations. Independent Samples t-tests were applied to compare employee and consumer ratings, while Pearson's  $r$  was used to examine correlations between demographic variables and perceived opportunities. These statistical tools facilitated a nuanced understanding of stakeholder perspectives and enabled the formulation of evidence-based strategic recommendations for SAMELCO II.

While the research was successfully completed, challenges emerged during the implementation phase. These included difficulties in securing respondent participation, especially in geographically dispersed and underserved areas. Concerns regarding data privacy and the perceived sensitivity of institutional evaluation posed additional barriers to obtaining informed consent. To overcome these, the researcher employed a hybrid data collection strategy, combining digital and physical outreach efforts. Close coordination with SAMELCO II leadership and barangay officials was critical in facilitating community trust and logistical support. Despite time constraints and limited digital access among some consumers, these efforts yielded a high response rate and rich data that significantly enhanced the study's credibility and policy relevance.

Ethical considerations were central to the research process. Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks, in accordance with ethical guidelines outlined by Israel and Hay (2006). Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and participation remained voluntary throughout. Confidentiality was strictly upheld by anonymizing data and limiting access to the research team. These measures were essential in maintaining the integrity of the research and in encouraging candid responses. The study was further guided by institutional research ethics protocols and adhered to national data privacy regulations, particularly in the handling of sensitive consumer and employee information.

In conclusion, the study's methodology was characterized by a rigorously applied descriptive-correlational design, validated instruments, comprehensive sampling strategies, and robust statistical techniques. Ethical standards were strictly observed, and practical challenges were addressed through adaptive fieldwork and stakeholder collaboration. The outcome is a methodologically sound investigation into SAMELCO II's public service delivery performance, offering actionable insights to enhance citizen satisfaction, institutional trust, and the realization of public value.

### III. Results and Discussion

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation of SAMELCO II's public service delivery, the study examined the demographic and socio-economic profiles of two distinct stakeholder groups: the Consumers Group and the Employees Group. This dual-perspective approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of how varied backgrounds, experiences, and socio-economic positions shape perceptions of service challenges and opportunities.

The consumer-respondents ( $n = 300$ ) represented a diverse cross-section of SAMELCO II's service beneficiaries. Table 3 outlines their highest educational attainment, indicating that the majority (40.7%) were elementary school graduates, with an additional 20.0% having completed only part of their elementary education. Another 18.0% reached high school level without graduating, while 10.0% completed high school. Only 15.0% had some college education, and a modest 10.0% held college degrees. This educational profile underscores the need for simplified communication strategies in service dissemination, billing, and complaint resolution. Limited literacy among a large portion of the consumer base may hinder their full participation in feedback systems and service evaluation mechanisms. As such, SAMELCO II must prioritize inclusive communication tools—such as visual aids and vernacular translations—to enhance information access and institutional trust among its consumer population. The monthly family income distribution (Table 4) further contextualizes the consumers' lived experiences and service expectations. A significant majority (42.7%) reported earnings below ₱30,000 monthly, with another 30.7% falling within the ₱30,000 to ₱43,000 range. Only a small fraction (1.7%) reported incomes above ₱86,000. This income stratification reveals a predominantly low-income consumer base, whose affordability concerns likely influence their perceptions of electricity rates, billing practices, and service reliability. These findings imply that SAMELCO II's service strategies must consider income-sensitive interventions—such as tiered pricing models, flexible payment schemes, and consumption awareness campaigns—to address affordability gaps and promote equitable access to essential energy services.

With regard to place of residence (Table 5), the consumer sample was primarily drawn from urban and peri-urban areas within the province of Samar. The highest concentration came from Poblacion Paranas (31.7%), followed by Poblacion Catbalogan (22.7%), Brgy. Canlapwas (21.3%), and Brgy. Muñoz (19.3%). Brgy. Iguid, a relatively rural and underserved area, accounted for only 0.05% of respondents. This geographic distribution suggests that most participants are situated in areas with greater exposure to SAMELCO II's administrative and operational services. Nonetheless, the underrepresentation of remote barangays raises important considerations regarding geographic disparities in service access. For SAMELCO II, this necessitates targeted infrastructure investments and service equity policies that cater to the needs of isolated and lower-density areas, thereby advancing spatial justice in public utility delivery.

While the consumer profile reflects external stakeholder perspectives, the Employees Group ( $n = 126$ ) represents the internal institutional lens, comprising personnel from various

departments and functional roles within SAMELCO II. Employees were selected through stratified sampling to ensure proportional representation across administrative, technical, and frontline positions. Although demographic breakdowns such as age, tenure, and departmental affiliations were not disaggregated in the current presentation, the inclusion of the full employee base via complete enumeration ensures comprehensive coverage of internal viewpoints on organizational performance, service delivery gaps, and institutional challenges. This profile balance—between internal and external respondents—enhances the analytical rigor of the study by facilitating comparative assessments of public service delivery from the perspectives of service providers and recipients. It enables the identification of perceptual gaps and shared concerns, forming the basis for strategic recommendations that address both user-centric expectations and institutional capacities. In doing so, the study contributes not only to the empirical evaluation of SAMELCO II's performance but also to the broader discourse on participatory governance, accountability, and stakeholder engagement in public service reform.

**Level of Challenges in Public Service Delivery**  
The overall assessment placed the level of challenges in SAMELCO II's service delivery at a mean of 3.8, interpreted as "Challenging." Notably, consumers rated the challenges as "Highly Challenging" ( $M = 4.2$ ), compared to employees who assessed them as only "Challenging" ( $M = 3.4$ ). Consumers pointed to frequent power outages, delayed complaint resolution, limited access in rural areas, and poor customer communication. The divergence between consumer and employee perceptions highlights the need for improved service transparency, responsiveness, and stakeholder communication. Whereas level of Opportunities in Public Service Delivery Both consumers and employees identified moderate opportunities across the domains of desired societal outcomes ( $M = 3.34$ ), citizen satisfaction ( $M = 3.14$ ), institutional trust ( $M = 3.22$ ), and intangible contributions to public welfare ( $M = 3.12$ ). Employees consistently rated opportunities more favorably than consumers. Key areas for development include energy affordability, communication, billing transparency, and crisis responsiveness. These findings suggest that while SAMELCO II is seen as meeting basic service expectations, it must undertake systemic improvements to elevate public satisfaction and trust.

**Differences in Perceived Challenges Based on Consumer Profile**  
Statistical analysis indicated significant differences in perceived challenges based on educational attainment ( $p = 0.035$ ), monthly income ( $p = 0.047$ ), and place of residence ( $p = 0.039$ ). More educated and higher-income consumers were more critical, while rural residents reported greater service-related hardships. These outcomes align with spatial and socio-economic theories, implying that consumer background shapes service expectations and perceptions of inequality. Whereas, differences in Perceived Opportunities Based on Consumer Profile Significant differences were also found in perceived opportunities based on the same demographic variables—education ( $p = 0.035$ ), income ( $p = 0.047$ ), and location ( $p = 0.039$ ). Higher-educated and urban consumers recognized more opportunities, while lower-income and rural consumers cited limited access. These findings call for SAMELCO II to deploy targeted, equity-driven

programs to bridge service gaps and improve perception among underserved populations. Lastly, differences Between Employee and Consumer Assessments of Opportunities Consumers consistently rated SAMELCO II's opportunities higher than employees, as confirmed by statistically significant differences in achievement of societal outcomes ( $p = 0.008$ ), citizen satisfaction ( $p = 0.012$ ), and institutional trust ( $p = 0.009$ ). These discrepancies reflect distinct stakeholder viewpoints—consumers focus on lived experiences while employees assess service delivery against internal benchmarks. Bridging this gap requires inclusive planning, increased transparency, and stronger consumer-employee feedback integration.

Relationship Between Consumer Profile and Perceived Opportunities Correlational analysis revealed significant associations between monthly income and all four opportunity domains, while educational attainment and residence showed selective but meaningful correlations. These findings suggest that socio-economic and spatial factors strongly influence perceptions of public service equity. Addressing these disparities through customized outreach, subsidy programs, and localized service innovations is critical for inclusive public service reform. While, relationship Between Perceived Challenges and Opportunities Results showed significant negative correlations between the level of perceived challenges and opportunity ratings, particularly in citizen satisfaction ( $r = -0.335$ ), trust in institution ( $r = -0.342$ ), and public welfare elements ( $r = -0.344$ ). This indicates that as perceived challenges increase, perceptions of institutional value and trust decline. Addressing key service pain points—such as outage response, billing clarity, and rural electrification—is essential to reversing this trend.

Proposed Strategic Plan Based on Findings Informed by the findings, the study recommends a multi-pronged strategic plan centered on: (1) infrastructure modernization to enhance reliability; (2) consumer education and digital literacy initiatives; (3) targeted subsidy programs for low-income groups; (4) enhanced communication platforms for real-time updates; (5) participatory governance to increase transparency and stakeholder trust; and (6) internal capacity-building for employee engagement and service excellence. These strategies aim to align service delivery with consumer expectations and institutional goals, fostering a more equitable and resilient utility cooperative.

#### IV. Conclusion

1. The majority of consumers were low-income and possessed limited educational attainment, primarily residing in urban centers. These conditions necessitate literacy-sensitive, income-responsive, and geographically inclusive service strategies.
2. Consumers rated SAMELCO II's service delivery as highly challenging, particularly citing power outages and slow responsiveness, while employees perceived fewer issues—highlighting a critical gap in service perception and institutional communication.

3. Opportunities for improvement were moderately rated across all indicators, suggesting that while basic needs are met, there is a need for innovation in affordability, transparency, and public engagement to enhance overall service impact.
4. Significant variations in perceived service challenges were found across education, income, and residence, affirming that socio-economic and geographic factors shape consumer expectations and experiences.
5. More educated, urban, and higher-income consumers reported greater perceived opportunities, indicating unequal access and necessitating differentiated service models to address underserved groups.
6. Consumers generally assessed service opportunities more favorably than employees, underscoring the need for stakeholder dialogue and performance alignment between internal operations and public expectations.
7. Strong correlations were observed between income and all opportunity dimensions, with education and residence also influencing perceptions—suggesting that inclusive, socio-demographically tailored policies are essential.
8. A negative correlation existed between perceived challenges and service opportunities, indicating that unresolved issues diminish satisfaction and trust, calling for immediate attention to service reliability and accessibility.
9. A six-point strategic plan is proposed, focusing on infrastructure upgrades, consumer education, subsidy programs, improved communication, participatory governance, and staff development to achieve equitable and citizen-centered service delivery.

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