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## **Linking Accountability to the Public Service Performance in the Public Sector of Bahrain**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to test the impact of accountability on public service performance in the public sector of Bahrain. Reviewing the literature, accountability is found to be one major factor that contributes to the improvement and effectiveness of public service performance. The inconsistency of results in the literature and scarcity of research in the field of accountability and public service performance in Bahrain prompted this study. The findings of this study showed that accountability has a direct and significant relationship with public service performance.

**Keywords:** accountability; public service performance; public sector of Bahrain.

### **1. Introduction**

Improving public sector service performance in term of its effectiveness and efficiency is a major issue and priority agenda of governments throughout the world today. Good public sector service performance means that the public sector organization is effective and efficient in providing goods and services to its citizens.

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The performance of the public sector is the results of activities in a specific area or aggregated performance of several or all activities in the whole sector measured in absolute terms or as in comparison to the results achieved in the previous periods [1]. In essence, the main objective of the public sector is to develop policies and programs to be implemented for the benefit of the citizens [2]. The public sector is thus aimed to develop and deliver services to meet the needs of the people. Although it is not motivated by profit, it can be planned to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through its effectiveness and efficiency [3]. From the economics standpoint, the public services delivery consists of activities for the purpose of enhancing public welfare, where it is considered as a basic component of the social contract between citizens and state [4]. In the midst of today's challenges, governments all over the world are facing greater expectation to improve the problem of poor service delivery performance [5]. Within this context, Reference [6] listed several reasons attributed to poor public sector performance, among them are: prevailing corruption and lack of accountability and transparency, inadequate citizen's participation, poor human resources policy, failure to manage change, lack of employee capacity, poor planning and poor monitoring and evaluation. The most critical and importance factor is lack of accountability especially as it relates to public sector performances in the developing countries [7].

## **2. Accountability**

According to [8] accountability refers to the obligation to show that work has been performed according to agreed rules and results were accurately as well as transparently reported. Reference [9] Regards accountability as the government and its agents' responsibility to the public to achieve objectives as planned and in the process being accountable for their own action or inaction. Reference [10] Considers accountability as a bureaucratic responsibility segregated into internal and external accountabilities. Internal accountability refers to answerability of public officials to those who supervised their work in the organization's hierarchy while external accountability refers to answerability for action that has been performed to authorities outside their department or organization. Reference [11] argues that the essence of accountability is answerability, which is being accountable to answer questions with regard to actions or decisions made by public officials.

Hence, accountability is considered as a mechanism to ensure and to control the actions of public officials from misusing the power entrusted to them [12]. Accountability too is considered as an important tool to ascertain that public officials perform their responsibilities well [13]. Conceptually, accountability concerns with the processes to showcase that official exercised their power and discharged their duties properly and responsibly. In general, Reference [14] concludes that accountability is now a widespread concept that significantly affects all side of government processes and functionaries.

## **3. Public Service Performance**

One of the most important functions of government is to provide good and satisfactory services to its general public and citizens. Public service delivery refers to the provision of services by government through its public entities and agencies to the communities. According to [9] public service delivery is the act of providing public activities or benefits which may range from the delivery of the tangible public goods to the intangible public services. Reference [15] explain that public service refers to activities of government employees to formulate

and implement government policies for the interests of its citizens. Recent findings from the literature indicated that lack of accountability, poor communication, corruption and mismanagement are part of the root causes that contributed to the unsatisfactory and poor public services performance [4]. Despite numerous policy reform efforts, only little improvements were recorded as the problem of poor service delivery performance still persist [16]. In essence, what constitutes good or poor public service performance is measured on the efficiency, effectiveness as well as its equitable accessibility and delivery to all members of the public in a given constituency [17].

#### **4. Public Sector of Bahrain**

The public sector delivery in Bahrain has evolved over the years with some significant reforms and has undergone major development in its administration and implementation geared towards supporting the kingdom's economic and social development plans. The establishment of Civil Service Bureau (CSB) as an agency of the Bahrain government in 1975 through a royal decree specifically known as the Amiri Decree number 6 was a major step towards modernizing the country's public sector management [18]. This bureau was assigned as a central management and control of all personnel providing services to the government and people of Bahrain. The CSB, being an independent government entity was placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs to further improve the management and performance of personnel in all the government agencies [19]. The CSB establishment marks the start of the administrative reform process in Bahrain with the sole mission of develop a good systems of administration competent of providing quality service delivery fitting of modern management. The reforms underpinned the overall meaning of liberalization of the economy, operation and adoption of market mechanisms, encouraging investment and improving the service provided to the citizens and their beneficiaries [20].

#### **5. The importance of Accountability on Public Service Performance**

There are many factors that influenced public service performance. When one looks at the governmental bureaucratic performance in the public service, one would automatically relate it to its accountability [10]. Therefore, accountability is significant to the operation of the government as it provides clear policy and programs as well as offers understanding, implementation procedures and control that can lead to better performance [21]. In addition, according to [12] accountability represents good governance on the part of the government especially as it operates in the midst of growing resentment from citizens specifically in the developing economies. Hence, accountability is a phenomenon that has attracted great interest from researchers in the field of public sector service delivery and it related performance [22]. More often now, citizens are allowed to question public policies and procedures and other related functions and actions of the government on whether they are right, ethical, just or legal.

Accountability is important to ensure proper functioning and effective performance of public service delivery [12] as it is considered as a monitoring device to ensure better and quality services [23]. Moreover, accountability now is accepted as an important feature for effective and efficient service delivery [24]. However, in the case of Bahrain, there is a prevailing feeling of poor accountability and hence resulting in low level of

public service delivery performance ([25;26;27;28;29]).

## **6. Literature review**

On the other hand, Based on the review of literature and previous research that have been conducted in many countries have supported conceptually and empirically, the relationship between accountability and public sector organizations. Where concluded that the results have positive and significant relationship for example: [30,31,32].

## **7. Research Hypothesis**

Based on the above discussions, we hypothesize that:

H1: There is a significant influence of accountability on public service performance.

## **8. Methodology**

The population of this study is the citizens of Bahrain. The total number of Bahraini people is 664,707 thousand [33] (Information & Government Authority 2016). In addition, the Kingdom of Bahrain consists of 4 Governorates: The Capital, Muharraq, Northern and Southern, each governorate consists of a number of residential blocks. For the purpose of sampling selection for this study, a systematic random sampling technique will be used in order to give every element in the population in proportion to its size. Therefore, the suitable sample size as proposed by [34] should be 384 questionnaires distributed to the selected citizens.

The sample were collected for a period of three months, starting from 21st May 2017 to the 21st August 2017. A total of 384 responses were returned, thus giving a rate of response of 60%. However, 368 questionnaires were finally deemed usable thus giving a response rate 57.5% from distributed samples as 16 questionnaires were excluded because important sections of the questionnaires were left uncompleted.

Data analysis was conducted by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. A total number of copies of questionnaires that distributed in this study were 640 copies, distributed to citizens according to percentage of population.

The survey questionnaires were distributed to assess the relationship between accountability and public service performance in Bahrain. A five point Likert scale of 1 to 5 that ranges from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree was used. There are two sections for the questionnaire. Section 1 consists of a six (6) items measuring public service performance adapted from [35]. Section 2 consists of a seven (7) items of questionnaire measuring accountability adapted from [21].

## **9. Test of the reliability**

To evaluate the measurements of the reliability the Cronbach's alpha were used in this study. According to, Reference [36] the level of acceptable minimum of Cronbach's alpha is 0.60. The results of the reliability test of

the two variables, accountability and public service performance were illustrated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Reliability Analysis

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Accountability	7	.625
Public service performance	6	.854

**10. Descriptive statistics of the variables**

Descriptive analysis focuses on main variables in this study through calculated the minimum, maximum scale, mean and standard deviation for each variable, of the independent variable (accountability), dependent variable (public service performance), as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Accountability	3.37	.61	1.14	5.00
Public service performance	2.85	.79	1.00	5.00

**11. Analysis of Result**

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the hypothesis (H1) in order to access the nature of the relationship between the two variables of the independent variable accountability and the dependent variable public service performance. The details of Pearson findings were as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** The findings of Pearson on the Relationship between Public Service Performance and Accountability

Variable	Public Service Performance	Accountability
<b>Public Service Performance</b>	1	.465**
<b>Accountability</b>	.465**	1

The findings revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship with  $r = .465$  at  $p < 0.01$ . Hence, the hypothesis was supported as shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** The findings of Hypotheses testing on the relationship between Accountability and Public Service Performance.

Hypothesis	Description	Finding
H1	There is a positive and significant relationship between Accountability and Public Service Performance.	Supported

Regression analysis was conducted to analyse the relationship between Accountability and Public Service

Performance, as shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5:** The Result of the Regression Analysis on the Relationship between Accountability and Public Service Performance

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Sign
	<b>(Public Service Performance)</b>	
Accountability	.465***	.000
F Value	100.710	
R <sup>2</sup>	.216	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.214	
Durbin Watson	1.815	

Note: \*Significant level is  $p < .05$ , \*\* Significant level is  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* Significant level is  $p < .001$

Based on the above table the findings showed that  $\beta = .465, R^2 = .216$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .214$ ,  $F = 100.710$  with  $p < .000$ . This result showed that coefficient correlation was .465, which indicated that there was a significant and positively impact for accountability on public service performance. For the measurement of accountability and public service performance relationship, accountability explained 21.6% of variance on public service performance. This indicated that 78.4% of the public service performance was explained by other factors not accounted or factored in the analysis.

## 12. Conclusion

This study discussed empirically the impact of accountability on public service performance in the public sector of Bahrain. The result of this study proved that there is a positive and significant relationship between accountability and public service performance. The result therefore confirmed and supported our hypothesis. The result revealed that the mean value of the participant was 3.37 which considered in the range of moderate. It indicated that the accountability in the public sector of Bahrain is effective but not at the desired level.

On the other hand, the effectiveness accountability on performance of public services in particular and the public sector in general lead to increase opportunities of elimination of wastages hence reducing the burden of the financial and administration costs. This may lead to achieving economic development targets. The result of this study therefore illustrated the importance of enhancing accountability as it has direct and significant impact on the performance of public services performance. Based on the results presented above, this study recommends that policy makers and public personnel in Bahrain should strive for greater accountability to enhance its public service delivery performance.

## 13. Limitations of the Study

The important limitations of this study was lack of previous studies that which address the same variables in

Bahrain, especially the variable of public service performance which considered the main issue in this study

#### **14. Recommendations**

Based on the result that achieved in this study it means that the accountability is considered important to ensure proper functioning and performance of public services. Thus, in order to good performance of public services the public sector of Bahrain needs more effectiveness of accountability.

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